MOSES MAIMONIDES

THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED

VOLUME ONE

Translated and with an Introduction and Notes by
SHLOMO PINES

Introductory Essay by
LEO STRAUSS

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VOLUME I

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To Professor Ralph Lerner of the University of Chicago we wish to express our deepest thanks for the most valuable editorial task he has performed. He has contributed greatly to giving this translation an English style that reflects Maimonides' subtle prose. This contribution involved repeated recourse to both the Arabic and Hebrew versions of the *Guide* in order to verify the consistency and clarity of the translation. While we must absolve him of any responsibility for such defects as may still exist, we are very much obliged to Professor Lerner for his devoted labors, skill, patience, and wise understanding of the problems.

Shlomo Pines
Leo Strauss

PREFACE

*

EVERYONE connected with the production of this translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* has long felt that such a new translation was necessary. The legitimate demand that must be made of any translation is not satisfied by any of the existing modern language translations of the *Guide*. We rightly demand that a translation should remain as close as is practicable to the original, that within the limits of the possible it should give the reader an impression — both in general and in detail — resembling the impression offered by the original. In the present translation, pains have been taken to meet this demand. As far as was compatible with intelligibility, every Arabic technical term has been rendered by one and the same English term. Wherever the original is ambiguous or obscure, the translation has preserved or attempted to preserve that very ambiguity or obscurity. A special effort has been made to reproduce the artful interplay of Maimonides' Arabic text with his Hebrew and Aramaic quotations from the classic Jewish sources. Besides, considerable progress has been made, within the last generation, in the understanding of the *Guide*. These advances have, of course, been based on a close study of the original text, and as always in such cases, by virtue of these advances the existing translations prove now to be less adequate than they had appeared to be before. In other words, to the extent that earlier translators were not sufficiently sensitive to certain facets of the *Guide*, their translations failed to disclose those facets. A single example must suffice: where Maimonides speaks of "political," previous translators speak of "social"; where Maimonides says "city," they translate "state"; where Maimonides speaks of "political civic actions," they speak of "social conduct." A moment's reflection shows that an entirely different perspective is provided when the political is mentioned, rather than the social.

The present translation is based on the Arabic text established by S. Munk (*Le Guide des Égarés;* 3 vols.; Paris, 1856–66) and edited with variant readings

by Issachar Joel (*Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn;* Jerusalem: J. Junovitch, 5691 [1930/31]). Where the readings adopted by Munk and Joel have not been followed, this has been noted. The pagination of the Munk edition is indicated by thin vertical lines in the body of the text and by bracketed numerals in the running head. These numerals refer to those pages of the Arabic text whose beginnings are denoted by the first and last vertical lines occurring on the two facing pages. Italic type in the text has been reserved to indicate Maimonides' use of words that are clearly identifiable as being Hebrew or Aramaic. The division of the text into parts and chapters is Maimonides'. The Arabic text has no paragraphing, very little punctuation, and, of course, no capitalization; the translator is responsible for such features in this volume.

Shlomo Pines
Leo Strauss

CONTENTS

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VOLUME I

How To Begin To Study THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED
by LEO STRAUSS xi

Translator's Introduction lvii

THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED

PART I: 1

VOLUME II

PART II: 233

PART III: 413

Glossary 639

Indexes 643

BIBLICAL PASSAGES APPEARING IN THE TEXT 645

RABBINIC PASSAGES APPEARING IN THE TEXT 655

SECTS, COMMUNITIES, AND NONBIBLICAL WRITERS AND WRITINGS 657

HOW TO BEGIN TO STUDY

The Guide of the Perplexed

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I BELIEVE that it will not be amiss if I simply present the plan of the *Guide* as it has become clear to me in the course of about twenty-five years of frequently interrupted but never abandoned study. In the following scheme Roman (and Arabic) numerals at the beginning of a line indicate the sections (and subsections) of the *Guide* while the numbers given in parentheses indicate the Parts and the chapters of the book.

A. Views (I 1–III 24)

A′. Views regarding God and the angels (I 1–III 7)

I. Biblical terms applied to God (I 1–70)

א. Terms suggesting the corporeality of God (and the angels) (I 1–49)

1. The two most important passages of the Torah that seem to suggest that God is corporeal (I 1–7)
2. Terms designating place, change of place, the organs of human locomotion, etc. (I 8–28)
3. Terms designating wrath and consuming (or taking food) that if applied to divine things refer to idolatry on the one hand and to human knowledge on the other (I 29–36)
4. Terms designating parts and actions of animals (I 37–49)

ב. Terms suggesting multiplicity in God (I 50–70)

5. Given that God is absolutely one and incomparable, what is the meaning of the terms applied to God in nonfigurative speech? (I 50–60)
6. The names of God and the utterances of God (I 61–67)

7. The apparent multiplicity in God consequent upon His knowledge, His causality, and His governance (I 68–70)

II. Demonstrations of the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God (I 71–II 31)

1. Introductory (I 71–73)
2. Refutation of the Kalām demonstrations (I 74–76)
3. The philosophic demonstrations (II 1)
4. Maimonides' demonstration (II 2)
5. The angels (II 3–12)
6. Creation of the world, i.e., defense of the belief in creation out of nothing against the philosophers (II 13–24)
7. Creation and the Law (II 25–31)

III. Prophecy (II 32–48)

1. Natural endowment and training the prerequisites of prophecy (II 32–34)
2. The difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets (II 35)
3. The essence of prophecy (II 36–38)
4. The legislative prophecy (of Moses) and the Law (II 39–40)
5. Legal study of the prophecy of the prophets other than Moses (II 41–44)
6. The degrees of prophecy (II 45)
7. How to understand the divine actions and works and the divinely commanded actions and works as presented by the prophets (II 46–48)

IV. The account of the Chariot (III 1–7)

A″. Views regarding bodily beings that come into being and perish, and in particular regarding man (III 8–54)

V. Providence (III 8–24)

1. Statement of the problem: matter is the ground of all evils and yet matter is created by the absolutely good God (III 8–14)
2. The nature of the impossible or the meaning of omnipotence (III 15)
3. The philosophic arguments against omniscience (III 16)
4. The views regarding providence (III 17–18)

5. Jewish views on omniscience and Maimonides' discourse on this subject (III 19–21)
6. The book of Job as the authoritative treatment of providence (III 22–23)
7. The teaching of the Torah on omniscience (III 24)

B. Actions (III 25–54)

VI. The actions commanded by God and done by God (III 25–50)

1. The rationality of God's actions in general and of His legislation in particular (III 25–26)
2. The manifestly rational part of the commandments of the Torah (III 27–28)
3. The rationale of the apparently irrational part of the commandments of the Torah (III 29–33)
4. The inevitable limit to the rationality of the commandments of the Torah (III 34)
5. Division of the commandments into classes and explanation of the usefulness of each class (III 35)
6. Explanation of all or almost all commandments (III 36–49)
7. The narratives in the Torah (III 50)

VII. Man's perfection and God's providence (III 51–54)

1. True knowledge of God Himself is the prerequisite of providence (III 51–52)
2. True knowledge of what constitutes the human individual himself is the prerequisite of knowledge of the workings of providence (III 53–54)

The *Guide* consists then of seven sections or of thirty-eight subsections. Wherever feasible, each section is divided into seven subsections; the only section that does not permit of being divided into subsections is divided into seven chapters.

The simple statement of the plan of the *Guide* suffices to show that the book is sealed with many seals. At the end of its Introduction Maimonides describes the preceding passage as follows: "It is a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. When those gates are opened and those places are entered, the souls will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor." The *Guide* as a whole is not merely a key to

a forest but is itself a forest, an enchanted forest, and hence also an enchanting forest: it is a delight to the eyes. For the tree of life is a delight to the eyes.

The enchanting character of the *Guide* does not appear immediately. At first glance the book appears merely to be strange and in particular to lack order and consistency. But progress in understanding it is a progress in becoming enchanted by it. Enchanting understanding is perhaps the highest form of edification. One begins to understand the *Guide* once one sees that it is not a philosophic book—a book written by a philosopher for philosophers—but a Jewish book: a book written by a Jew for Jews. Its first premise is the old Jewish premise that being a Jew and being a philosopher are two incompatible things. Philosophers are men who try to give an account of the whole by starting from what is always accessible to man as man; Maimonides starts from the acceptance of the Torah. A Jew may make use of philosophy and Maimonides makes the most ample use of it; but as a Jew he gives his assent where as a philosopher he would suspend his assent (cf. II 16).

Accordingly, the *Guide* is devoted to the Torah or more precisely to the true science of the Torah, of the Law. Its first purpose is to explain biblical terms and its second purpose is to explain biblical similes. The *Guide* is then devoted above all to biblical exegesis, although to biblical exegesis of a particular kind. That kind of exegesis is required because many biblical terms and all biblical similes have an apparent or outer and a hidden or inner meaning; the gravest errors as well as the most tormenting perplexities arise from men's understanding the Bible always according to its apparent or literal meaning. The *Guide* is then devoted to "the difficulties of the Law" or to "the secrets of the Law." The most important of those secrets are the Account of the Beginning (the beginning of the Bible) and the Account of the Chariot (Ezek. 1 and 10). The *Guide* is then devoted primarily and chiefly to the explanation of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot.

Yet the Law whose secrets Maimonides intends to explain forbids that they be explained in public, or to the public; they may only be explained in private and only to such individuals as possess both theoretical and political wisdom as well as the capacity of both understanding and using allusive speech; for only "the chapter headings" of the secret teaching may be transmitted even to those who belong to the natural elite. Since every explanation given in writing, at any rate in a book, is a public explanation, Maimonides seems to be compelled by his intention to transgress the Law. There were other cases in which he was under such a compulsion. The Law also forbids one to study the books of idolaters on idolatry, for the first intention of the Law as a whole is to destroy every vestige of idolatry; and yet Maimonides, as he openly admits and even emphasizes, has studied all the

available idolatrous books of this kind with the utmost thoroughness. Nor is this all. He goes so far as to encourage the reader of the *Guide* to study those books by himself (III 29–30, 32, 37; *Mishneh Torah*, H. ʿAbodah Zarah II 2 and III 2). The Law also forbids one to speculate about the date of the coming of the Messiah, yet Maimonides presents such a speculation or at least its equivalent in order to comfort his contemporaries (*Epistle to Yemen*, 62, 16 ff., and 80, 17 ff. Halkin; cf. Halkin's Introduction, pp. xii–xiii; *M.T.*, H. Melakhim XII 2). Above all, the Law forbids one to seek for the reasons of the commandments, yet Maimonides devotes almost twenty-six chapters of the *Guide* to such seeking (III 26; cf. II 25). All these irregularities have one and the same justification. Maimonides transgresses the Law "for the sake of heaven," i.e., in order to uphold or to fulfill the Law (I Introd. and III Introd.). Still, in the most important case he does not, strictly speaking, transgress the Law, for his written explanation of the secrets of the Law is not a public but a secret explanation. The secrecy is achieved in three ways. First, every word of the *Guide* is chosen with exceeding care; since very few men are able or willing to read with exceeding care, most men will fail to perceive the secret teaching. Second, Maimonides deliberately contradicts himself, and if a man declares both that *a* is *b* and that *a* is not *b*, he cannot be said to declare anything. Lastly, the "chapter headings" of the secret teaching are not presented in an orderly fashion but are scattered throughout the book. This permits us to understand why the plan of the *Guide* is so obscure. Maimonides succeeds immediately in obscuring the plan by failing to divide the book explicitly into sections and subsections or by dividing it explicitly only into three Parts and each Part into chapters without supplying the Parts and the chapters with headings indicating the subject matter of the Parts or of the chapters.

The plan of the *Guide* is not entirely obscure. No one can reasonably doubt for instance that II 32–48, III 1–7, and III 25–50 form sections. The plan is most obscure at the beginning and it becomes clearer as one proceeds; generally speaking, it is clearer in the second half (II 13–end) than in the first half. The *Guide* is then not entirely devoted to secretly transmitting chapter headings of the secret teaching. This does not mean that the book is not in its entirety devoted to the true science of the Law. It means that the true science of the Law is partly public. This is not surprising, for the teaching of the Law itself is of necessity partly public. According to one statement, the core of the public teaching consists of the assertions that God is one, that He alone is to be worshipped, that He is incorporeal, that He is incomparable to any of His creatures and that He suffers from no defect and no passion (I 35). From other statements it would appear that the acceptance of the Law on every level of comprehension presupposes belief in God, in angels, and in prophecy (III 45) or that the basic beliefs are those in God's unity and in Creation

(II 13). In brief one may say that the public teaching of the Law in so far as it refers to beliefs or to "views," can be reduced to the thirteen "roots" (or dogmas) which Maimonides had put together in his Commentary on the Mishnah. That part of the true science of the Law which is devoted to the public teaching of the Law or which is itself public has the task of demonstrating the roots to the extent to which this is possible or of establishing the roots by means of speculation (III 51 and 54). Being speculative, that part of the true science of the Law is not exegetic; it is not necessarily in need of support by biblical or talmudic texts (cf. II 45 beginning). Accordingly, about 20 per cent of the chapters of the *Guide* contain no biblical quotations and about 9 per cent of them contain no Hebrew or Aramaic expressions whatever. It is not very difficult to see (especially on the basis of III 7 end, 23, and 28) that the *Guide* as devoted to speculation on the roots of the Law or to the public teaching consists of sections II–III and V–VI as indicated in our scheme and that the sequence of these sections is rational; but one cannot understand in this manner why the book is divided into three Parts, or what sections I, IV, and VII and most, not to say all, subsections mean. The teaching of the *Guide* is then neither entirely public or speculative nor is it entirely secret or exegetic. For this reason the plan of the *Guide* is neither entirely obscure nor entirely clear.

Yet the *Guide* is a single whole. What then is the bond uniting its exegetic and its speculative ingredients? One might imagine that while speculation demonstrates the roots of the Law, exegesis proves that those roots as demonstrated by speculation are in fact taught by the Law. But in that case the *Guide* would open with chapters devoted to speculation, yet the opposite is manifestly true. In addition, if the exegesis dealt with the same subject matter as that speculation which demonstrates the public teaching par excellence, namely, the roots of the Law, there would be no reason why the exegesis should be secret. Maimonides does say that the Account of the Beginning is the same as natural science and the Account of the Chariot is the same as divine science (i.e., the science of the incorporeal beings or of God and the angels). This might lead one to think that the public teaching is identical with what the philosophers teach, while the secret teaching makes one understand the identity of the teaching of the philosophers with the secret teaching of the Law. One can safely say that this thought proves to be untenable on almost every level of one's comprehending the *Guide*: the nonidentity of the teaching of the philosophers as a whole and the thirteen roots of the Law as a whole is the first word and the last word of Maimonides. What he means by identifying the core of philosophy (natural science and divine science) with the highest secrets of the Law (the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot) and therewith by somehow identifying the subject matter of

speculation with the subject matter of exegesis may be said to be the secret par excellence of the *Guide*.

Let us then retrace our steps. The *Guide* contains a public teaching and a secret teaching. The public teaching is addressed to every Jew including the vulgar; the secret teaching is addressed to the elite. The secret teaching is of no use to the vulgar and the elite does not need the *Guide* for being apprised of the public teaching. To the extent to which the *Guide* is a whole, or one work, it is addressed neither to the vulgar nor to the elite. To whom then is it addressed? How legitimate and important this question is appears from Maimonides' remark that the chief purpose of the *Guide* is to explain as far as possible the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot "with a view to him for whom (the book) has been composed" (III beginning). Maimonides answers our question both explicitly and implicitly. He answers it explicitly in two ways; he says on the one hand that the *Guide* is addressed to believing Jews who are perfect in their religion and in their character, have studied the sciences of the philosophers, and are perplexed by the literal meaning of the Law; he says on the other hand that the book is addressed to such perfect human beings as are Law students and perplexed. He answers our question more simply by dedicating the book to his disciple Joseph and by stating that it has been composed for Joseph and his like. Joseph had come to him "from the ends of the earth" and had studied under him for a while; the interruption of the oral instruction through Joseph's departure, which "God had decreed," induced Maimonides to write the *Guide* for Joseph and his like. In the Epistle Dedicatory addressed to Joseph, Maimonides extolls Joseph's virtues and indicates his limitation. Joseph had a passionate desire for things speculative and especially for mathematics. When he studied astronomy, mathematics, and logic under Maimonides, the teacher saw that Joseph had an excellent mind and a quick grasp; he thought him therefore fit to have revealed to him allusively the secrets of the books of the prophets and he began to make such revelations. This stimulated Joseph's interest in things divine as well as in an appraisal of the Kalām; his desire for knowledge about these subjects became so great that Maimonides was compelled to warn him unceasingly to proceed in an orderly manner. It appears that Joseph was inclined to proceed impatiently or unmethodically in his study and that this defect had not been cured when he left Maimonides. The most important consequence of Joseph's defect is the fact, brought out by Maimonides' silence, that Joseph turned to divine science without having studied natural science under Maimonides or before, although natural science necessarily precedes divine science in the order of study.

The impression derived from the Epistle Dedicatory is confirmed by the book itself. Maimonides frequently addresses the reader by using expressions like "know"

or "you know already." Expressions of the latter kind indicate what the typical addressee knows and expressions of the former kind indicate what he does not know. One thus learns that Joseph has some knowledge of both the content and the character of divine science. He knows for example that divine science in contradistinction to mathematics and medicine requires an extreme of rectitude and moral perfection, and in particular of humility, but he apparently does not yet know how ascetic Judaism is in matters of sex (I 34, III 52). He had learned from Maimonides' "speech" that the orthodox "views" do not last in a man if he does not confirm them by the corresponding "actions" (II 31). It goes without saying that while his knowledge of the Jewish sources is extensive, it is not comparable in extent and thoroughness to Maimonides' (II 26, 33). At the beginning of the book he does not know that both according to the Jewish view and according to demonstration, angels have no bodies (I 43, 49) and he certainly does not know, strictly speaking, that God has no body (I 9). In this respect as well as in other respects his understanding necessarily progresses while he advances in his study of the *Guide* (cf. I 65 beginning). As for natural science, he has studied astronomy but is not aware of the conflict between the astronomical principles and the principles of natural science (II 24), because he has not studied natural science. He knows a number of things that are made clear in natural science, but this does not mean that he knows them through having studied natural science (cf. I 17, 28; III 10). From the ninety-first chapter (II 15) it appears that while he knows Aristotle's *Topics* and Fārābī's commentary on that work, he does not know the *Physics* and *On the Heaven* (cf. II 8). Nor will he acquire the science of nature as he acquires the science of God and the angels while he advances in the study of the *Guide*. For the *Guide*, which is addressed to a reader not conversant with natural science, does not itself transmit natural science (II 2). The following remark occurring in the twenty-sixth chapter is particularly revealing: "It has been demonstrated that everything moved undoubtedly possesses a magnitude and is divisible; and it will be demonstrated that God possesses no magnitude and hence possesses no motion." What "has been demonstrated" has been demonstrated in the *Physics* and is simply presupposed in the *Guide*; what "will be demonstrated" belongs to divine science and not to natural science; but that which "will be demonstrated" is built on what "has been demonstrated." The student of the *Guide* acquires knowledge of divine science but not of natural science. The author of the *Guide* in contradistinction to its addressee is thoroughly versed in natural science. Still, the addressee needs some awareness of the whole in order to be able to ascend from the whole to God, for there is no way to knowledge of God except through such ascent (I 71 toward the end); he acquires that awareness through a report of some kind (I 70) that Maimonides has inserted into the *Guide*. It is characteristic of that report

that it does not contain a single mention of philosophy in general and of natural science in particular. The serious student cannot rest satisfied with that report; he must turn from it to natural science itself, which demonstrates what the report merely asserts. Maimonides cannot but leave it to his reader whether he will turn to genuine speculation or whether he will be satisfied with accepting the report on the authority of Maimonides and with building on that report theological conclusions. The addressee of the *Guide* is a man regarding whom it is still undecided whether he will become a genuine man of speculation or whether he will remain a follower of authority, if of Maimonides' authority (cf. I 72 end). He stands at the point of the road where speculation branches off from acceptance of authority.

Why did Maimonides choose an addressee of this description? What is the virtue of not being trained in natural science? We learn from the seventeenth chapter that natural science had already been treated as a secret doctrine by the pagan philosophers "upon whom the charge of corruption would not be laid if they exposed natural science clearly": all the more is the community of the Law-adherents obliged to treat natural science as a secret science. The reason why natural science is dangerous and is kept secret "with all kinds of artifices" is not that it undermines the Law – only the ignorant believe that (I 33), and Maimonides' whole life as well as the life of his successors refutes this suspicion. Yet it is also true that natural science has this corrupting effect on all men who are not perfect (cf. I 62). For natural science surely affects the understanding of the meaning of the Law, of the grounds on which it is to be obeyed and of the weight that is to be attached to its different parts. In a word, natural science upsets habits. By addressing a reader who is not conversant with natural science, Maimonides is compelled to proceed in a manner that does not upset habits or does so to the smallest possible degree. He acts as a moderate or conservative man.

But we must not forget that the *Guide* is written also for atypical addressees. In the first place, certain chapters of the *Guide* are explicitly said to be useful also for those who are simply beginners. Since the whole book is somehow accessible to the vulgar, it must have been written in such a way as not to be harmful to the vulgar (I Introd.; III 29). Besides, the book is also meant to be useful to such men of great intelligence as have been trained fully in all philosophic sciences and as are not in the habit of bowing to any authority – in other words, to men not inferior to Maimonides in their critical faculty. Readers of this kind will be unable to bow to Maimonides' authority; they will examine all his assertions, speculative or exegetic, with all reasonable severity; and they will derive great pleasure from all chapters of the *Guide* (I Introd.; I 55, 68 end, 73, tenth premise).

How much Maimonides' choice of his typical addressee affects the plan of his book will be seen by the judicious reader glancing at our scheme. It suffices to

mention that no section or subsection of the *Guide* is devoted to the bodies that do not come into being and perish (cf. III 8 beginning, and I 11), i.e., to the heavenly bodies, which according to Maimonides possess life and knowledge, or to "the holy bodies," to use the bold expression used by him in his Code (*M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-Torah IV 12). In other words, no section or subsection of the *Guide* is devoted to the Account of the Beginning in the manner in which a section is devoted to the Account of the Chariot. More important, Maimonides' choice of his typical addressee is the key to the whole plan of the *Guide*, to the apparent lack of order or to the obscurity of the plan. The plan of the *Guide* appears to be obscure only so long as one does not consider the kind of reader for which the book is written or so long as one seeks for an order agreeing with the essential order of subject matter. We recall the order of the sciences: logic precedes mathematics, mathematics precedes natural science, and natural science precedes divine science; and we recall that while Joseph was sufficiently trained in logic and mathematics, he is supposed to be introduced into divine science without having been trained properly in natural science. Maimonides must therefore seek for a substitute for natural science. He finds that substitute in the traditional Jewish beliefs and ultimately in the biblical texts correctly interpreted: the immediate preparation for divine science in the *Guide* is exegetic rather than speculative. Furthermore, Maimonides wishes to proceed in a manner that changes habits to the smallest possible degree. He himself tells us which habit is in particular need of being changed. After having reported the opinion of a pagan philosopher on the obstacles to speculation, he adds the remark that there exists now an obstacle that the ancient philosopher had not mentioned because it did not exist in his society: the habit of relying on revered "texts," i.e., on their literal meaning (I 31). It is for this reason that he opens his book with the explanation of biblical terms, i.e., with showing that their true meaning is not always their literal meaning. He cures the vicious habit in question by having recourse to another habit of his addressee. The addressee was accustomed not only to accept the literally understood biblical texts as true but also in many cases to understand biblical texts according to traditional interpretations that differed considerably from the literal meaning. Being accustomed to listen to authoritative interpretations of biblical texts, he is prepared to listen to Maimonides' interpretations as authoritative interpretations. The explanation of biblical terms that is given by Maimonides authoritatively is in the circumstances the natural substitute for natural science.

But which biblical terms deserve primary consideration? In other words, what is the initial theme of the *Guide*? The choice of the initial theme is dictated by the right answer to the question of which theme is the most urgent for the typical addressee and at the same time the least upsetting to him. The first theme of the

Guide is God's incorporeality. God's incorporeality is the third of the three most fundamental truths, the preceding ones being the existence of God and His unity. The existence of God and His unity were admitted as unquestionable by all Jews; all Jews as Jews know that God exists and that He is one, and they know this through the biblical revelation or the biblical miracles. One can say that because belief in the biblical revelation precedes speculation, and the discovery of the true meaning of revelation is the task of exegesis, exegesis precedes speculation. But regarding God's incorporeality there existed a certain confusion. The biblical texts suggest that God is corporeal and the interpretation of these texts is not a very easy task (II 25, 31, III 28). God's incorporeality is indeed a demonstrable truth but, to say nothing of others, the addressee of the *Guide* does not come into the possession of the demonstration until he has advanced into the Second Part (cf. I 1, 9, 18). The necessity to refute "corporealism" (the belief that God is corporeal) does not merely arise from the fact that corporealism is demonstrably untrue: corporealism is dangerous because it endangers the belief shared by all Jews in God's unity (I 35). On the other hand, by teaching that God is incorporeal, one does not do more than to give expression to what the talmudic Sages believed (I 46). However, the Jewish authority who had given the most consistent and the most popularly effective expression to the belief in God's incorporeality was Onqelos the Stranger, for the primary preoccupation of his translation of the Torah into Aramaic, which Joseph knew as a matter of course, was precisely to dispose of the corporealistic suggestions of the original (I 21, 27, 28, 36 end). Maimonides' innovation is then limited to his deviation from Onqelos' procedure: he does explicitly what Onqelos did implicitly; whereas Onqelos tacitly substituted noncorporealistic terms for the corporealistic terms occurring in the original, Maimonides explicitly discusses each of the terms in question by itself in an order that has no correspondence to the accidental sequence of their occurrence in the Bible. As a consequence, the discussion of corporealism in the *Guide* consists chiefly of a discussion of the various biblical terms suggesting corporealism, and, vice versa, the chief subject of what Maimonides declares to be the primary purpose of the *Guide*, namely, the explanation of biblical terms, is the explanation of biblical terms suggesting corporealism. This is not surprising. There are no biblical terms that suggest that God is not one, whereas there are many biblical terms that suggest that God is corporeal: the apparent difficulty created by the plural *Elohim* can be disposed of by a single sentence or by a single reference to Onqelos (I 2).

The chief reason why it is so urgent to establish the belief in God's incorporeality, however, is supplied by the fact that that belief is destructive of idolatry. It was of course universally known that idolatry is a very grave sin, nay, that the Law has, so to speak, no other purpose than to destroy idolatry (I 35, III 29 end).

But this evil can be completely eradicated only if everyone is brought to know that God has no visible shape whatever or that He is incorporeal. Only if God is incorporeal is it absurd to make images of God and to worship such images. Only under this condition can it become manifest to everyone that the only image of God is man, living and thinking man, and that man acts as the image of God only through worshipping the invisible or hidden God alone. Not idolatry but the belief in God's corporeality is a fundamental sin. Hence the sin of idolatry is less grave than the sin of believing that God is corporeal (I 36). This being the case, it becomes indispensable that God's incorporeality be believed in by everyone whether or not he knows by demonstration that God is incorporeal. With regard to the majority of men it is sufficient and necessary that they believe in this truth on the basis of authority or tradition, i.e., on a basis that the first subsections of the *Guide* are meant to supply. The teaching of God's incorporeality by means of authoritative exegesis, i.e., the most public teaching of God's incorporeality, is indispensable for destroying the last relics of paganism: the immediate source of paganism is less the ignorance of God's unity than the ignorance of His radical incorporeality (cf. I 36 with *M.T.*, H. ʿAbodah Zarah I 1).

It is necessary that we understand the character of the reasoning that Maimonides uses when he determines the initial theme of the *Guide*. We limit ourselves to a consideration of the second reason demanding the teaching of Incorporeality. While the belief in Unity leads immediately to the rejection of the worship of "other gods" but not to the rejection of the worship of images of the one God, the belief in Incorporeality leads immediately only to the rejection of the worship of images or of other bodies but not to the rejection of the worship of other gods: all gods may be incorporeal. Only if the belief in God's incorporeality is based on the belief in His unity, as Maimonides' argument indeed assumes, does the belief in God's incorporeality appear to be the necessary and sufficient ground for rejecting "forbidden worship" in every form, i.e., the worship of other gods as well as the worship of both natural things and artificial things. This would mean that the prohibition against idolatry in the widest sense is as much a dictate of reason as the belief in God's unity and incorporeality. Yet Maimonides indicates that only the theoretical truths pronounced in the Decalogue (God's existence and His unity), in contradistinction to the rest of the Decalogue, are rational. This is in agreement with his denying the existence of rational commandments or prohibitions as such (II 33; cf. I 54, II 31 beginning, III 28; *Eight Chapters* VI). Given the fact that Aristotle believed in God's unity and incorporeality and yet was an idolater (I 71, III 29), Maimonides' admiration for him would be incomprehensible if the rejection of idolatry were the simple consequence of that belief. According to Maimonides, the Law agrees with Aristotle in

holding that the heavenly bodies are endowed with life and intelligence and that they are superior to man in dignity; one could say that he agrees with Aristotle in implying that those holy bodies deserve more than man to be called images of God. But unlike the philosophers he does not go so far as to call those bodies "divine bodies" (II 4–6; cf. Letter to Ibn Tibbon). The true ground of the rejection of "forbidden worship" is the belief in creation out of nothing, which implies that creation is an absolutely free act of God or that God alone is the complete good that is in no way increased by creation. But creation is according to Maimonides not demonstrable, whereas God's unity and incorporeality are demonstrable. The reasoning underlying the determination of the initial theme of the *Guide* can then be described as follows: it conceals the difference of cognitive status between the belief in God's unity and incorporeality on the one hand and the belief in creation on the other; it is in accordance with the opinion of the Kalām. In accordance with this, Maimonides brings his disagreement with the Kalām into the open only after he has concluded his thematic discussion of God's incorporeality; in that discussion he does not even mention the Kalām.

It is necessary that we understand as clearly as possible the situation in which Maimonides and his addressee find themselves at the beginning of the book, if not throughout the book. Maimonides knows that God is incorporeal; he knows this by a demonstration that is at least partly based on natural science. The addressee does not know that God is incorporeal; nor does he learn it yet from Maimonides: he accepts the fact that God's incorporeality is demonstrated, on Maimonides' authority. Both Maimonides and the addressee know that the Law is a source of knowledge of God; only the Law can establish God's incorporeality for the addressee in a manner that does not depend on Maimonides' authority. But both know that the literal meaning of the Law is not always its true meaning and that the literal meaning is certainly not the true meaning when it contradicts reason, for otherwise the Law could not be "your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations" (Deut. 4:6). Both know in other words that exegesis does not simply precede speculation. Yet only Maimonides knows that the corporealistic expressions of the Law are against reason and must therefore be taken as figurative. The addressee does not know and cannot know that Maimonides' figurative interpretations of those expressions are true: Maimonides does not adduce arguments based on grammar. The addressee accepts Maimonides' interpretations just as he is in the habit of accepting the Aramaic translations as correct translations or interpretations. Maimonides enters the ranks of the traditional Jewish authorities: he simply tells the addressee what to believe regarding the meaning of the biblical terms. Maimonides introduces Reason in the guise of Authority. He takes on the garb of authority. He tells the addressee to believe in

God's incorporeality because, as he tells him, contrary to appearance, the Law does not teach corporeality, because, as he tells him, corporeality is a demonstrably wrong belief.

But we must not forget the most important atypical addressee, the reader who is critical and competent. He knows the demonstration of God's incorporeality and the problems connected with it as well as Maimonides does. Therefore the exegetic discussion of God's incorporeality which is presented in the first forty-nine chapters of the *Guide*, and which is pre-speculative and hence simply public as far as the typical addressee is concerned, is post-speculative and hence secret from the point of view of the critical and competent reader. The latter will examine Maimonides' explanations of biblical terms in the light of the principle that one cannot establish the meanings of a term if one does not consider the contexts in which they occur (II 29; cf. *Epistle to Yemen* 46, 7 ff.) or that while grammar is not a sufficient condition, it is surely the necessary condition of interpretation. For while the competent reader will appreciate the advantages attendant upon a coherent discussion of the biblical terms in question as distinguished from a translation of the Bible, he will realize that such a discussion may make one oblivious of the contexts in which the terms occur. He will also notice contradictions occurring in the *Guide*, remember always that they are intentional, and ponder over them.

The readers of the *Guide* were told at the beginning that the first purpose of the book is the explanation of biblical terms. They will then in no way be surprised to find that the book opens with the explanation of biblical terms in such a way that, roughly speaking, each chapter is devoted to the explanation of one or several biblical terms. They will soon become habituated to this procedure: they become engrossed by the subject matter, the What, and will not observe the How. The critical reader, however, will find many reasons for becoming amazed. To say nothing of other considerations, he will wonder why almost the only terms explained are those suggesting corporeality. It is perhaps not a matter of surprise that one chapter is devoted to the explanation of "place" and another to the explanation of "to dwell." But why is there no chapter devoted to "one," none to "merciful," none to "good," none to "intelligence," none to "eternity"? Why is there a chapter devoted to "grief" and none to "laughter"? Why is there a chapter devoted to "foot" and another to "wing" but none to "hand" nor to "arm"? Assuming that one has understood Maimonides' selection of terms, one still has to understand the order in which he discusses them. To what extent the explanation of terms is limited to terms suggesting corporeality, appears with particular clarity when one considers especially those chapters that are most visibly devoted to the explanation of terms, the lexicographic chapters. By a lexicographic chapter I understand a chapter that opens with the Hebrew term or terms to be explained

in the chapter regardless of whether these terms precede the first sentence or form the beginning of the first sentence, and regardless of whether these terms are supplied with the Arabic article *al-* or not. The lexicographic chapter may be said to be the normal or typical chapter in the discussion of God's incorporeality (I 1–49); thirty out of the forty-nine chapters in question are lexicographic whereas in the whole rest of the book there occur at most two such chapters (I 66 and 70). All these thirty chapters occur in I 1–45: two thirds of the chapters in I 1–45 are lexicographic. Thus the question arises why nineteen chapters of the discussion of God's incorporeality – and just the nineteen chapters having both the subject matters and the places that they do – are not lexicographic. Why do ten of these thirty lexicographic chapters begin with Hebrew terms preceding the first sentence and twenty of them begin with Hebrew terms forming part of the first sentence? Thirteen of the terms in question are nouns, twelve are verbs and five are verbal nouns: why does Maimonides in some cases use the verbs and in other cases the verbal nouns? Within the chapters, generally speaking, he discusses the term that is the subject of the chapter in question, first in regard to the various meanings it has when it is not applied to God and then in regard to the various meanings it has when applied to God; he proves the existence of each of these meanings in most cases by quoting one or more biblical passages; those quotations are sometimes explicitly incomplete (ending in "and so on") and more frequently not; the quotations used to illustrate a particular meaning of a particular term do not always follow the biblical order; they are frequently introduced by "he said" but sometimes they are ascribed to individual biblical authors or speakers; in most cases he does not add to the name of the biblical author or speaker the formula "may he rest in peace," but in some cases he does; sometimes "the Hebrew language" or "the language" is referred to. In a book as carefuly worded as is the *Guide* according to Maimonides' emphatic declaration, all these varieties, and others that we forgo mentioning, deserve careful consideration. It goes without saying that there is not necessarily only one answer to each of the questions implied in each of these varieties; the same device – e.g., the distinction between lexicographic and nonlexicographic chapters or the tracing of a biblical quotation to an individual biblical author – may fulfill different functions in different contexts. In order to understand the *Guide*, one must be fully awake and as it were take nothing for granted. In order to become enabled to raise the proper questions, one does well to consider the possibility that there exists the typical chapter or else to construct the typical chapter, i.e., to find out which of the varieties indicated are most in accordance with the primary function of the chapters devoted to the explanation of biblical terms: only the other varieties are in need of a special reason.

The first chapter of the *Guide* is devoted to "image and likeness." The selection of these terms was necessitated by a single biblical passage: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26–27). The selection of these terms for explanation in the first chapter is due to the unique significance of the passage quoted. That passage suggests to the vulgar mind more strongly than any other biblical passage that God is corporeal in the crudest sense: God has the shape of a human being, has a face, lips, and hands, but is bigger and more resplendent than man since He does not consist of flesh and blood, and is therefore in need, not of food and drink, but of odors; His place is in Heaven from which He descends to the earth, especially to high mountains, in order to guide men and to find out what they do, and to which He ascends again with incredible swiftness; He is moved, as men are, by passions, especially by anger, jealousy, and hate, and thus makes men frightened and sad; His essence is Will rather than Intellect. (Cf. I 10, 20, 36–37, 39, 43, 46, 47, 68.) Maimonides tells his addressee that *ṣelem* (the Hebrew term which is rendered by "image") does not mean, if not exactly in any case, but certainly in the present case, a visible shape; it means the natural form, the specific form, the essence of a being: "God created man in his image" means that God created man as a being endowed with intellect or that the divine intellect links itself with man. Similar considerations apply to the Hebrew term rendered by "likeness." The Hebrew term designating form in the sense of visible shape is *to'ar*, which is never applied to God. After having dispelled the confusion regarding "image" Maimonides says: "We have explained to thee the difference between *ṣelem* and *to'ar* and we have explained the meaning of *ṣelem*." He thus alludes to the twofold character of his explanation here as well as elsewhere: one explanation is given to "thee," i.e., to the typical addressee, and another is given to indeterminate readers; the latter explanation comes to sight only when one considers, among other things, the context of all biblical passages quoted. To mention only one example, the second of the three quotations illustrating the meaning of *to'ar* is "What form is he of?" (I Sam. 28:14). The quotation is taken from the account of King Saul's conversation with the witch of Endor, whom the king had asked to bring up to him the dead prophet Samuel; when the woman saw Samuel and became frightened and the king asked her what she saw, she said: "I saw gods (*elohim*) ascending out of the earth." The account continues as follows: "And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said: an old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle." Maimonides himself tells us in the next chapter that *elohim* is an equivocal term that may mean angels and rulers of cities as well as God; but this does not explain why that term is also applied to the shades of the venerable departed – beings

without flesh and blood – which frighten men either because those shades do not wish to be "disquieted," i.e., they wish to rest in peace, or for other reasons. To say nothing of other reasons, the rational beings inhabiting the lowest depth are in truth not men who have died, but all living men, the Adamites, i.e., the descendants of Adam, who lack Adam's pristine intellectuality (cf. I 2 with I 10). It looks as if Maimonides wished to draw our attention to the fact that the Bible contains idolatrous, pagan, or "Sabian" relics. If this suspicion should prove to be justified, we would have to assume that his fight against "forbidden worship" and hence against corporealism is more radical than one would be inclined to believe or that the recovery of Sabian relics in the Bible with the help of Sabian literature is one of the tasks of his secret teaching. However this may be, his interpretation of Genesis 1:26 seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Torah speaks shortly afterward of the divine prohibition addressed to Man against eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge: if Man was created as an intellectual being and hence destined for the life of the intellect, his Creator could not well have forbidden him to strive for knowledge. In other words, the biblical account implies that man's intellectuality is not identical with man's being created in the image of God but is a consequence of his disobedience to God or of God's punishing him for that sin. As we are told in the second chapter, this objection was raised not by the addressee of the *Guide* but by another acquaintance of Maimonides, a nameless scientist of whom we do not even know whether he was of Jewish extraction and who was apparently not very temperate in regard to drink and to sex. (Compare the parallel in III 19.) Maimonides tells his addressee that he replied to his objector as follows: the knowledge that was forbidden to Man was the knowledge of "good and evil," i.e., of the noble and base, and the noble and base are objects not of the intellect but of opinion; strictly speaking they are not objects of knowledge at all. To mention only the most important example, in Man's perfect state, in which he was unaware of the noble and base, although he was aware of the naturally good and bad, i.e., of the pleasant and painful, he did not regard the uncovering of one's nakedness as disgraceful. After having thus disposed of the most powerful objection to his interpretation of Genesis 1:26, or after having thus taught that the intellectual life is beyond the noble and base, Maimonides turns to the second most important passage of the Torah that seems to suggest that God is corporeal. More precisely, he turns both to the terms applied in that passage to God and to kindred terms. The passage, which occurs in Numbers 12:8, reads as follows: "he (Moses) beholds the figure of the Lord." He devotes to this subject three chapters (I 3–5); in I 3 he discusses explicitly the three meanings of "figure" and in I 4 he discusses explicitly the three meanings of the three terms designating "beholding" or "seeing"; in one of the biblical passages partly quoted, the Lord is

presented as having appeared to Abraham in the guise of three men who yet were one. Maimonides tells the addressee that the Hebrew terms designating "figure" and "beholding" (or its equivalents) mean, when they are applied to God, intellectual truth and intellectual grasp. The relation of I 5 to I 3–4 resembles the relation of I 2 and I 1. The view that man was created for the life of the intellect was contradicted by the apparent prohibition against acquiring knowledge. Similarly, "the prince of the philosophers" (i.e., Aristotle) apparently contradicts his view that man exists for the life of the intellect by apologizing for his engaging in the investigation of very obscure matters: Aristotle apologizes to his readers for his apparent temerity; in fact, he is prompted only by his desire to know the truth. This restatement of an Aristotelian utterance affords an easy transition to the Jewish view according to which Moses was rewarded with beholding the figure of the Lord because he had previously "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exod. 3:6). The pursuit of knowledge of God must be preceded by fear of looking upon God or, to use the expression that Aristotle had used in the passage in question (*On the Heaven* 291b 21 ff.) and that does not occur in Maimonides' summary, by sense of shame: the intellectual perfection is necessarily preceded by moral perfection – by one's having acquired the habit of doing the noble and avoiding the base – as well as by other preparations. Maimonides' emphasis here on moral perfection, especially on temperance, as a prerequisite of intellectual perfection is matched by his silence here on natural science as such a prerequisite. The weeding-out of corporealism proceeds *pari passu* with the watering of asceticism. Having arrived at this point, Maimonides does something strange: he abruptly turns to the explanation of the terms "man and woman" (I 6) and "to generate" (I 7). The strangeness, however, immediately disappears once one observes that I 6–7 are the first lexicographic chapters after I 1 and one remembers that I 2 is merely a corollary of I 1: the explanation of "man and woman" and of "to generate" forms part of the explanation of Genesis 1:26–27. There it is said that "in the image of God created (God man); male and female created he them." Literally understood, that saying might be thought to mean that man is the image of God because he is bisexual or that the Godhead contains a male and a female element that generate "children of God" and the like. Accordingly, the last word of I 7 is the same as the first word of I 1: "image." Maimonides does not discuss the implication which was stated, for it is one of the secrets of the Torah and we are only at the beginning of our training. The explanation of the key terms (or their equivalents) occurring in Genesis 1:26–27 surrounds then the explanation of the key terms (or their equivalents) occurring in Numbers 12:8. The discussion of the most important passages of the Torah regarding Incorporeality forms the fitting subject of the first subsection of the *Guide*. That subsection seems to be devoted to

five unconnected groups of terms; closer inspection shows that it is devoted to two biblical passages: Maimonides seems to hesitate to sever the umbilical cord connecting his exegesis with Onqelos'.

At first glance the theme of the second subsection is much easier to recognize than that of the first. This seems to be due to the fact that that theme is not two or more biblical passages but biblical terms designating phenomena all of which belong essentially together: place as well as certain outstanding places, occupying place, changing place, and the organs for changing place. Nineteen of the twenty-one chapters of the second subsection are manifestly devoted to this theme. The discussion begins with "place" (I 8), turns to "throne" (I 9), a most exalted place that if ascribed to God designates not only the temple but also and above all the heaven, and then turns to "descending and ascending" (I 10). While this sequence is perfectly lucid, we are amazed to find that, whereas I 8 and 9 are lexicographic chapters, I 10 is not a lexicographic chapter. This irregularity can be provisionally explained as follows: when Maimonides treats thematically several verbs in one lexicographic chapter, those verbs are explicitly said to have the same or nearly the same meaning (I 15, 18); when he treats thematically verbs that primarily designate opposites but do not designate opposites if applied to God, he treats them in separate chapters (I 11, 12, 22, 23); but "descending" and "ascending" designate opposites both in their primary meaning and if applied to God: God's descending means both His revealing Himself and His punitive action, and His ascending means the cessation of His revelation or punitive action (cf. the silence on "returning" at the beginning of I 23). Maimonides indicates the unique character of the subject "descent and ascent" by treating it in a nonlexicographic chapter surrounded on the one side by four and on the other side by three lexicographic chapters. On the basis of "the vulgar imagination" God's natural state would be sitting on His throne and sitting is the opposite of rising. "Sitting" and "rising" (I 11 and 12) designate opposites but do not designate opposites if applied to God: although God's "sitting" refers to His unchangeability, His "rising" refers to His keeping His promises or threats, it being understood that His promises to Israel may very well be threats to Israel's enemies. A talmudic passage that confirms Maimonides' public explanation and in which "sitting" is mentioned together, not with "rising," but with "standing up" naturally leads to the discussion of "standing up" (I 13), which term, according to Maimonides, means if applied to God His unchangeability, an unchangeability not contradicted, as he indicates, by God's threats to destroy Israel.

Having arrived at this point, Maimonides interrupts his discussion of verbs or of other terms that refer to place and turns to the explanation of "man" (I 14). A similar interruption occurs shortly afterwards when he turns from "standing" and "rock" (I 15 and 16) to an explanation of the prohibition against

the public teaching of natural science (I 17). Although these chapters are subtly interwoven with the chapters preceding and following them, at first glance they strikingly interrupt the continuity of the argument. By this irregularity our attention is drawn to a certain numerical symbolism that is of assistance to the serious reader of the *Guide*: 14 stands for man or the human things and 17 stands for nature. The connection between "nature" and "change of place" (or, more generally, motion), and therewith the connection between the theme of I 17 and the subsection to which that chapter belongs, has been indicated before. The connection between "14" and the context cannot become clear before we have reached a better understanding of the relation between nature and convention; at present it must suffice to say that I 7 deals with "to generate." Although I 26 obviously deals with terms referring to place, it also fulfills a numerological function: the immediate theme of that chapter is the universal principle governing the interpretation of the Torah ("the Torah speaks according to the language of human beings"); 26 is the numerical equivalent of the secret name of the Lord, the God of Israel; 26 may therefore also stand for His Torah. Incidentally, it may be remarked that 14 is the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew for "hand"; I 28 is devoted to "foot": no chapter of the *Guide* is devoted to "hand," the characteristically human organ, whereas Maimonides devotes a chapter, the central chapter of the fourth subsection, to "wing," the organ used for swift descent and ascent. In all these matters one can derive great help from studying Joseph Albo's *Roots*. Albo was a favorite companion living at the court of a great king.

Of the twenty-one chapters of the second subsection sixteen are lexicographic and five (I 10, 14, 17, 26, 27) are not. Of these sixteen chapters two begin with Hebrew terms supplied with the Arabic article (I 23 and 24). Thus only seven of the twenty-one chapters may be said to vary from the norm. In seven of the fourteen chapters beginning with a pure Hebrew term, that term precedes the first sentence and in the seven others the Hebrew term forms part of the first sentence. Seven of these chapters begin with a verb and seven with a noun or a verbal noun. It is one thing to observe these regularities and another thing to understand them. The distinction between the verbs and the verbal nouns is particularly striking, since lexicographic chapters beginning with verbal nouns occur only in our subsection. Furthermore, of the three lexicographic chapters of the first subsection, one opens with nouns preceding the first sentence, one with nouns forming part of the first sentence, and one with a verb preceding the first sentence; orderliness would seem to require that there be a chapter opening with a verb that forms part of the first sentence. One of the chapters of the second subsection (I 22) begins with a verb preceding the first sentence but the first sentence opens with the verbal noun (supplied with the Arabic article) of the same verb; there occurs no other

case of this kind in the whole book. If we count this ambiguous chapter among the chapters beginning with a verbal noun forming part of the first sentence, we reach this conclusion: the second subsection contains four chapters beginning with verbs or verbal nouns preceding the first sentence and eight chapters beginning with verbs or verbal nouns forming part of the first sentence. Furthermore, the second subsection contains six chapters beginning with verbs and six chapters beginning with verbal nouns; of the latter six chapters three begin with pure verbal nouns and three begin with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article. The second subsection surpasses the first subsection in regularity especially if I 22 is properly subsumed. From all this we are led to regard it as possible that I 22 somehow holds the key to the mystery of the second subsection.

The first chapter of the second subsection (I 8) is devoted to "place," a term that in post-biblical Hebrew is used for designating God Himself. To our great amazement Maimonides is completely silent about this meaning of "place." His silence is all the more eloquent since he quotes in this very chapter post-biblical Hebrew expressions containing "place," since he admonishes the readers in this very chapter to consult regarding his explanation of any term not only "the books of prophecy" but also other "compilations of men of science" – Talmud and Midrash are such compilations – and since he had concluded the preceding chapter with a quotation from the Midrash. In the only other lexicographic chapter devoted to a term used for designating God Himself – in I 16, which is devoted to "rock" – he does not hesitate to say that that term is also used for designating God, for that meaning of "rock" is biblical. We see then how literally he meant his declaration that the first intention of the *Guide* is to explain terms occurring in "the books of prophecy," i.e., primarily in the Bible: he is primarily concerned with the theology of the Bible in contradistinction to post-biblical Jewish theology. He is alive to the question raised by the Karaites. As he puts it, not only does criticism of the talmudic Sages do no harm to them – it does not even do any harm to the critic or rather to the foundations of belief (I Introd., 5 end, 19 end, 46 end; cf. *Resurrection* 29, 10–30, 15 Finkel). This observation enables us to solve the difficulty presented by I 22.

I 18–21 opened with verbs; I 22 marks the transition from chapters opening with verbs to chapters opening with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article; I 23–24 open with verbal nouns supplied with the Arabic article. I 25 opens again with a verb. That verb is "to dwell." The transition made in I 22 and the procedure in I 23–24 make us expect that I 25 should open with the verbal noun "the dwelling," the *Shekhinah*, the post-biblical term particularly used for God's Indwelling on earth, but this expectation is disappointed. Maimonides makes all these preparations in order to let us see that he is anxious to avoid as a

chapter heading the term *Shekhinah*, which does not occur in the Bible in any sense, and to avoid the Hebrew term *Shekhinah* in its theological sense within the most appropriate chapter itself: when speaking there of the *Shekhinah* theologically, he uses the Arabic translation of *Shekhinah* but never that Hebrew term itself. He does use the Hebrew term *Shekhinah* in a theological meaning in a number of other chapters, but *Shekhinah* never becomes a theme of the *Guide*: there are no "chapters on the *Shekhinah*" as there are "chapters on providence" or "chapters on governance" (I 40 and 44). It should also be noted that the chapter devoted to "wing" does not contain a single reference to the *Shekhinah* (cf. particularly Maimonides' and Ibn Janāḥ's explanation of Isaiah 30:20 with the Targum *ad loc.*). In the chapter implicitly devoted to the *Shekhinah*, which is the central chapter of the part devoted to Incorporeality (I 1–49), Maimonides had mentioned the *Shekhinah* together with providence, but *Shekhinah* and providence are certainly not identical (cf. I 10 and 23). One should pay particular attention to the treatment of the *Shekhinah* in the chapters obviously devoted to providence strictly understood (III 17–18 and 22–23). With some exaggeration one may say that whereas the *Shekhinah* follows Israel, providence follows the intellect. In other words, it is characteristic of the *Guide* that in it *Shekhinah* as a theological theme is replaced by "providence," and "providence" in its turn to some extent by "governance," "governance" being as it were the translation of *Merkabah* ("Chariot"), as appears from I 70. Needless to say, it is not in vain that Maimonides uses the Arabic article at the beginning of I 23 and 24. He thus connects I 23 and 24 and the context of these chapters with the only other group of chapters all of which begin with a Hebrew term supplied with the Arabic article: III 36–49. That group of chapters deals with the individual biblical commandments, i.e., with their literal meaning rather than their extra-biblical interpretation, as is indicated in the chapter (III 41) that stands out from the rest of the group for more than one reason and that is devoted to the penal law. One reason why that chapter stands out is that it is the only chapter whose summary, in III 35, is adorned with a biblical quotation, III 35 being the chapter that serves as the immediate introduction to III 36–49. To repeat, the second subsection of the *Guide* draws our attention to the difference between the biblical and the post-biblical Jewish teaching or to the question raised by the Karaites. Maimonides, it need hardly be said, answered that question in favor of the Rabbanites, although not necessarily in their spirit. It suffices to remember that not only *Shekhinah* but also "providence" and "governance" are not biblical terms.

Like the first subsection, the second subsection is based on two biblical passages, although not as visibly and as clearly as the first. The passages are Exodus 33:20–23 and Isaiah 6. In the former passage the Lord says to Moses:

"Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live: . . . thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Accordingly, Moses sees only the Lord's "glory pass by." In the latter passage Isaiah says: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. . . . Mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah does not speak, as Moses did, of "the figure of the Lord" or of "the image of God." Nor is it said of Isaiah, as it is said of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: "they saw the God of Israel: *and there was under his feet etc.* . . . And the nobles of the children of Israel . . . saw God, *and did eat and drink*" and thus suggested that the vision was imperfect (cf. I 5 with Albo's *Roots* III 17). We are thus induced to believe that Isaiah reached a higher stage in the knowledge of God than Moses or that Isaiah's vision marks a progress beyond Moses'. At first hearing, this belief is justly rejected as preposterous, not to say blasphemous: the denial of the supremacy of Moses' prophecy seems to lead to the denial of the ultimacy of Moses' Law, and therefore Maimonides does not tire of asserting the supremacy of Moses' prophecy. But the belief in the ultimacy of Moses' Law and even in the supremacy of Moses' prophecy in no way contradicts the belief in a certain superiority of Isaiah's speeches to Moses' speeches – to say nothing of the fact that Maimonides never denied that he deliberately contradicts himself. The following example may prove to be helpful. In his *Treatise on Resurrection*, Maimonides teaches that resurrection, one of the thirteen roots of the Law, is clearly taught within the Bible only in the book of Daniel, but certainly not in the Torah. He explains this apparently strange fact as follows: at the time when the Torah was given, all men, and hence also our ancestors, were Sabians, believing in the eternity of the world, for they believed that God is the spirit of the sphere, and denying the possibility of revelation and of miracles; hence a very long period of education and habituation was needed until our ancestors could be brought even to consider believing in that greatest of all miracles, the resurrection of the dead (26, 18–27, 15 and 31, 1–33, 14 Finkel). This does not necessarily mean that Moses himself did not know this root of the Law but he certainly did not teach it. At least in this respect the book of Daniel, of a late prophet of very low rank (II 45), marks a great progress beyond the Torah of Moses. All the easier is it to understand that Isaiah should have made some progress beyond Moses.

The reason why progress beyond the teaching of the Torah is possible or even necessary is twofold. In the first place, the Torah is the law par excellence. The supremacy of Moses' prophecy – the superiority of Moses' knowledge even to that of the Patriarchs – is connected with its being the only legislative prophecy (I 63, II 13, 39). But precisely because his prophecy culminates in the Law, it reflects the limitations of law. Law is more concerned with actions than with thoughts

(III 27–28; I Introd.). Mosaic theology reflects this orientation. According to the opinion of many of our contemporaries, Maimonides' theological doctrine proper is his doctrine of the divine attributes (I 50–60). In that subsection he quotes passages from the Torah only in that single chapter (I 54) in which he discusses the thirteen divine attributes revealed to Moses (Exod. 34:5–7); those attributes – all of them moral qualities – constitute the Mosaic theology; they express positively what in negative expression is called in the same context "God's back parts." Although God's goodness had been revealed to Moses in its entirety, the thirteen attributes articulate only that part of God's goodness which is relevant for the ruler of a city who is a prophet. Such a ruler must imitate the divine attributes of wrath and mercy not as passions – for the incorporeal God is above all passion – but because actions of mercy or wrath are appropriate in the circumstances, and he must imitate God's mercy and wrath in due proportion. The ruler of a city on the other hand must be more merciful than full of anger, for extreme punitiveness is required only because of the necessity, based on "human opinion," to exterminate the idolaters by fire and sword (I 54). Following another suggestion of Maimonides (I 61–63) one could say that the adequate statement of Mosaic theology is contained in the divine name YHVH – a name by which God revealed Himself for the first time to Moses as distinguished from the Patriarchs: "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name YHVH was I not known to them" (Exod. 6:3). Maimonides recognizes that this verse asserts or establishes the superiority of Moses' prophecy to that of the Patriarchs (II 35) but he does not explain that verse: he does not explain, at least not clearly, which theological verities other than the thirteen attributes were revealed to Moses but were unknown to the Patriarchs. Only this much may be said to emerge: Abraham was a man of speculation who instructed his subjects or followers rather than a prophet who convinced by miracles and ruled by means of promises and threats, and this is somehow connected with the fact that he called "on the name of YHVH, the God of the world" (Gen. 21:33) (I 63, II 13), i.e., the God of the trans-moral whole rather than the law-giving God. It is this Abrahamitic expression that opens each Part of the *Guide* as well as other writings of Maimonides. Considering all these things, one will find it wise to limit oneself to saying that the Mosaic theology par excellence is the doctrine of the thirteen moral attributes.

Second, the Mosaic legislation was contemporary with the yet unbroken and universal rule of Sabianism. Therefore the situation in the time of Moses was not different from the situation in the time of Abraham, who disagreed with all men, all men having the same Sabian religion or belonging to the same religious community. The innovation was naturally resisted, even with violence, although

it was not a principle of Sabianism to exterminate unbelievers. Yet the Torah has only one purpose: to destroy Sabianism or idolatry. But the resistance by the Sabians proper was less important than the inner Sabianism of the early adherents of the Torah. It was primarily for this reason that Sabianism could be overcome only gradually: human nature does not permit the direct transition from one opposite to the other. To mention only the most obvious example, our ancestors had been habituated to sacrifice to natural or artificial creatures. The sacrificial laws of the Torah are a concession to that habit. Since the simple prohibition or cessation of sacrifices would have been as unintelligible or distasteful to our ancestors as the prohibition or cessation of prayer would be now, God provided that henceforth all sacrifices be transferred to Him and no longer be brought to any false gods or idols. The sacrificial laws constitute a step in the gradual transition, in the progress from Sabianism to pure worship, i.e., pure knowledge, of God (cf. I 54, 64); the sacrificial laws were necessary only "at that time." The Sabians believed that success in agriculture depends on worship of the heavenly bodies. In order to eradicate that belief, God teaches in the Torah that worship of the heavenly bodies leads to disaster in agriculture whereas worship of God leads to prosperity. For the reason given, the open depreciation of sacrifices as such occurs not yet in the Torah but in the prophets and in the Psalms. Conversely, the Torah is less explicit than the later documents regarding the duty of prayer (III 29, 30, 32, 35–37). No less important an adaptation to Sabian habits is the corporealism of the Bible. For Sabianism is a form of corporealism; according to the Sabians, the gods are the heavenly bodies or the heavenly bodies are the body of which God is the spirit (III 29). As for the Bible, Maimonides' teaching on this subject is not free from ambiguity. The first impression we receive from his teaching is that according to it the corporealistic understanding of the Bible is a mere misunderstanding. For instance, *ṣelem* simply does not mean visible shape but only natural form, and even if it should sometimes mean visible shape, the term must be considered to be homonymous, and it certainly does not mean visible shape but natural form in Genesis 1:26–27 (I 1; cf. I 49). In other cases, perhaps in most cases, the primary meaning of the term – say, "sitting" – is corporealistic but when it is applied to God, it is used in a derivative or metaphoric sense; in those cases the meaning of the text, the literal meaning, is metaphoric. Generally stated, the literal meaning of the Bible is not corporealistic. But there are also cases in which the literal meaning is corporealistic, for instance in the many cases in which the Bible speaks of God's anger (cf. I 29). One must go beyond this and say that generally speaking the literal meaning of the Bible is corporealistic because "the Torah speaks in accordance with the language of the children of Man," i.e., in accordance with "the imagination of the vulgar," and the vulgar mind does not admit, at

least to begin with, the existence of any being that is not bodily; the Torah therefore describes God in corporealistic terms in order to indicate that He is (I 26, 47, 51 end). The Bible contains indeed innumerable passages directed against idolatry (I 36), but, as we have seen, idolatry is one thing and corporealism is another. The corporealistic meaning is not the only meaning, it is not the deepest meaning, it is not the true meaning, but it is as much intended as the true meaning; it is intended because of the need to educate and to guide the vulgar and, we may add, a vulgar that originally was altogether under the spell of Sabianism. What is true of the biblical similes is true also of the metaphoric biblical terms. According to the talmudic Sages, the outer of the similes is nothing while the inner is a pearl; according to King Solomon, who was "wiser than all men" (I Kings 5:11), the outer is like silver, i.e., it is useful for the ordering of human society, and the inner is like gold, i.e., it conveys true beliefs (I Introd.). Hence it is not without danger to the vulgar that one explains the similes or indicates the metaphoric character of expressions (I 33). For such biblical teachings as the assertions that God is angry, compassionate, or in other ways changeable, while not true, yet serve a political purpose or are necessary beliefs (III 28). A third possibility emerges through Maimonides' thematic discussion of providence. There he makes a distinction between the view of the Law regarding providence and the true view (III 17, 23). He could well have said that the true view is the secret teaching of the Law. Instead he says that the true view is conveyed through the book of Job, thus implying that the book of Job, a nonprophetic book whose characters are not Jews and that is composed by an unknown author (II 45; *Epistle to Yemen* 50, 19–52, 1 Halkin) marks a progress beyond the Torah and even beyond the prophets (cf. III 19). We recall that the simple co-ordination, taught by the Torah, of the worship of the Lord with agricultural and other prosperity was merely a restatement of the corresponding Sabian doctrine. As Maimonides indicates when explaining the account of the revelation on Mount Sinai, the beautiful consideration of the texts is the consideration of their outer meaning (II 36 end, 37). This remark occurs within the section on prophecy in which he makes for the first time an explicit distinction between the legal (or exegetic) and the speculative discussion of the same subject (cf. II 45 beginning). Accordingly, he speaks in his explanation of the Account of the Chariot, at any rate apparently, only of the literal meaning of this most secret text (III Introd.). Or to state the matter as succinctly as Maimonides does in the last chapter, the science of the Law is something essentially different, not only from the post-biblical or at any rate extra-biblical legal interpretation of the Law, but from wisdom, i.e., the demonstration of the views transmitted by the Law, as well.

Undoubtedly Maimonides contradicts himself regarding Moses' prophecy. He declares that he will not speak in the *Guide* explicitly or allusively about the

characteristics of Moses' prophecy because or although he had spoken most explicitly about the differences between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets in his more popular writings. And yet he teaches explicitly in the *Guide* that Moses' prophecy, in contradistinction to that of the other prophets, was entirely independent of the imagination or was purely intellectual (II 35, 36, 45 end). His refusal to speak of Moses' prophecy has indeed a partial justification. At least one whole subsection of the section on prophecy (II 41–44) is devoted to the prophecy of the prophets other than Moses, as is indicated by the frequent quotation in that subsection of this passage: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream"; for the Bible continues as follows: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house" (Num. 12:6–7). Still the assertion that Moses' prophecy was entirely independent of the imagination leads to a great difficulty if one considers the fact, pointed out by Maimonides in the same context (II 36; cf. II 47 beginning), that it is the imagination that brings forth similes and, we may add, metaphors, as well as the fact that the Torah abounds if not with similes, at any rate with metaphors. To mention only one example, Moses' saying that Eve was taken from one of Adam's ribs or that Woman was taken out of Man (Gen. 2:21–23) or derived from man reflects the fact that the word *ishah* (woman) is derived from the word *ish* (man) and such substitutions of the relation of words for the relation of things are the work of the imagination (cf. II 30 and 43; I 28; and *M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-torah I). In order to understand the contradiction regarding Moses' prophecy, we must return once more to the beginning. Maimonides starts from accepting the Law as seen through the traditional Jewish interpretation. The Law thus understood is essentially different from "demonstration" (II 3), i.e., the views of the Law are not as such based on demonstration. Nor do they become evident through "religious experience" or through faith. For, according to Maimonides, there is no religious experience, i.e., specifically religious cognition; all cognition or true belief stems from the human intellect, sense perception, opinion, or tradition; the cognitive status even of the Ten Commandments was not affected by or during the revelation on Mount Sinai: some of these utterances are and always remained matters of "human speculation," while the others are and always remained matters of opinion or matters of tradition (I 51 beginning and II 33; *Letter on Astrology* §§ 4–5 Marx; and *Logic* chap. 8). As for faith, it is, according to Maimonides, only one of the moral virtues, which as such do not belong to man's ultimate perfection, the perfection of his intellect (III 53–54). The views of the Law are based on a kind of "speculative perception" that human speculation is unable to understand and that grasps the truth without the use of speculative premises or without reasoning; through this kind of perception peculiar

to prophets, the prophet sees and hears nothing except God and angels (II 38, 36, 34). Some of the things perceived by prophets can be known with certainty also through demonstration. While for instruction in these things nonprophetic men are not absolutely in need of prophets, they depend entirely on prophets regarding those divine things that are not accessible to human speculation or demonstration. Yet the nonrational element in the prophetic speeches is to some extent imaginary, i.e., infra-rational. It is therefore a question how nonprophetic men can be certain of the supra-rational teaching of the prophets, i.e., of its truth. The general answer is that the supra-rational character of the prophetic speeches is confirmed by the supra-natural testimony of the miracles (II 25, III 29). In this way the authority of the Law as wholly independent of speculation is established wholly independently of speculation. Accordingly the understanding or exegesis of the Law can be wholly independent of speculation and in particular of natural science; and considering the higher dignity of revelation, exegesis will be of higher rank than natural science in particular; the explanations given by God Himself are infinitely superior to merely human explanations or traditions. This view easily leads to the strictest biblicism. "The difficulty of the Law" may be said to arise from the fact that the miracles do not merely confirm the truth of the belief in revelation but also presuppose the truth of that belief; only if one holds in advance the indemonstrable belief that the visible universe is not eternal can one believe that a given extraordinary event is a miracle (II 25). It is this difficulty that Maimonides provisionally solves by suggesting that Moses' prophecy is unique because it is wholly independent of the imagination, for if this suggestion is accepted, the difficulty caused by the presence of an infra-rational element in prophetic speeches does not arise. Yet if Moses' prophecy alone is wholly independent of the imagination, the Torah alone will be simply true, i.e., literally true, and this necessarily leads to extreme corporealism. Since corporealism is demonstrably wrong, we are compelled to admit that the Torah is not always literally true and hence, as matters stand, that the teaching of the other prophets may be superior in some points to that of Moses. The fundamental difficulty of how one can distinguish the supra-rational, which must be believed, from the infra-rational, which ought not to be believed, cannot be solved by recourse to the fact that we hear through the Bible, and in particular through the Torah, "God's book" par excellence (III 12), not human beings but God Himself. It is indeed true in a sense that God's speech gives the greatest certainty of His existence, and His declaring His attributes sets these attributes beyond doubt (cf. I 9 and 11, II 11), but God Himself cannot explain clearly the deepest secrets of the Torah to flesh and blood (I Introd., 31 beginning), He "speaks in accordance with the language of the children of man" (I 26), things that might have been made clear in the Torah are not made clear in it

(I 29), God makes use of ruses and of silence for only "a fool will reveal all his purpose and his will" (I 40; cf. III 32, 45 and 54) and, last but not least, as Maimonides explains in the *Guide*, God does not use speech in any sense (I 23) and this fact entails infinite consequences. One is therefore tempted to say that the infra-rational in the Bible is distinguished from the supra-rational by the fact that the former is impossible whereas the latter is possible: biblical utterances that contradict what has been demonstrated by natural science or by reason in any other form cannot be literally true but must have an inner meaning; on the other hand, one must not reject views the contrary of which has not been demonstrated, i.e., which are possible – for instance, creation out of nothing – lest one become thoroughly indecent (I 32, II 25). Yet this solution does not satisfy Maimonides. Whereas he had originally declared that the human faculty that distinguishes between the possible and the impossible is the intellect and not the imagination, he is compelled, especially in his chapters on providence, to question this verdict and to leave it open whether it is not rather the imagination that ought to have the last word (I 49, 73, III 15). He is therefore induced to say that the certainty of belief is one's awareness of the impossibility of the alternative or that the very existence of God is doubtful if it is not demonstrated or that man's intellect can understand what any intelligent being understands (I 50 and 51 beginning, 71, III 17). This is acceptable if the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot are indeed identical with natural science and divine science and if these sciences are demonstrative. But this enigmatic equation leaves obscure the place or the status of the fact of God's free creation of the world out of nothing: does this fact belong to the Account of the Beginning or to the Account of the Chariot or to both or to neither? (Cf. *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Ḥagigah II 1.) According to the *Guide*, the Account of the Chariot deals with God's governance of the world, in contradistinction not only to His providence (cf. I 44 on the one hand, and on the other I 40, where Maimonides refers to III 2 and not, as most commentators believe, to the chapters on providence, just as in III 2 he refers back to I 40), but also to His creation. By considering the relation of the Account of the Beginning and the Account of the Chariot, one is enabled also to answer completely the question that has led us to the present difficulty, the question concerning the order of rank between the Mosaic theophany and the Isaian theophany. The Account of the Beginning occurs in the Torah of Moses but the Account of the Chariot, which is identical with the divine science or the apprehension of God (I 34), occurs in the book of Ezekiel and in its highest form precisely in the sixth chapter of Isaiah (III 6; cf. also the quotations from the Torah on the one hand and from other biblical books on the other in III 54).

Once one has granted that there is an intra-biblical progress beyond the

teaching of Moses, one will not be compelled to deny the possibility of a post-biblical progress of this description. The fact of such a progress can only be proven if there are characteristic differences between the Bible and the post-biblical authoritative books. We could not help referring for instance to Maimonides'tacit confrontation of the talmudic view according to which the outer of the similes is "nothing" and of Solomon's view according to which it is "silver," i.e., politically useful; taken by itself this confrontation suggests that Solomon appreciated the political to a higher degree than did the talmudic Sages. The differences in question are to some extent concealed, since the post-biblical view ordinarily appears in the guise of an explanation of a biblical text. Maimonides discusses this difficulty in regard to homiletic rather than legal explanations; he rejects both the opinion that these explanations are genuine explanations of biblical texts and the opinion that since they are not genuine explanations, they ought not to be taken seriously; in fact the talmudic Sages used a poetic or a charming device, playing as it were with the text of the Bible, in order to introduce moral lessons not found in the Bible (III 43). He indicates that he will not stress his critique of the talmudic Sages (III 14 end). Since the emphasis on serious differences between the Bible and the Talmud could appear in the eyes of the vulgar as a criticism of the talmudic Sages, he has spoken on this subject with considerable, although not extraordinary, restraint. Whenever he presents a view as a view of the Law, one must consider whether he supports his thesis at all by biblical passages, and if he does so, whether the support is sufficient according to his standards as distinguished from traditional Jewish standards. In other words, in studying a given chapter or group of chapters one must observe whether he uses therein any post-biblical Jewish quotations at all and what is the proportion in both number and weight of post-biblical to biblical quotations. In the first chapter explicitly dealing with providence (III 17), he speaks of an "addition" to the text of the Torah that occurs "in the discourse of the Sages"; as one would expect, he disapproves of this particular "addition." This statement is prepared by an immediately preceding cluster of talmudic quotations that are in manifest agreement with the teaching of the Torah and that strike us with particular force because of the almost complete absence of talmudic quotations after the end of III 10. In this twofold way he prepares his silence on the future life in his presentation of the Torah view on providence: the solution of the problem of providence by recourse to the future life is more characteristic of the post-biblical teaching than of the Bible. According to the talmudic Sages, "in the future life there is no eating, nor drinking" and this means that the future life is incorporeal (*M.T.*, H. Teshubah VIII 3). It follows that the Talmud is freer from corporealism than the Bible (I 46, 47, 49, 70, II 3). Accordingly certain talmudic thoughts resemble Platonic thoughts and are expressed with the help of terms of

Greek origin (II 6). Similarly it was Onqelos the Stranger who more than anyone else made corporealism inexcusable within Judaism and may well have thought that it would be improper to speak in Syriac (i.e., Aramaic), as distinguished from Hebrew, of God's perceiving an irrational animal (I 21, 27, 28, 36, 48; cf. II 33). The progress of incorporealism is accompanied by a progress of asceticism. To mention only one example, the Talmud is to say the least much clearer than the Bible about the fact that Abraham had never looked at his beautiful wife until sheer self-preservation compelled him to do so (III 8, 47, 49). There is a corresponding progress in gentleness (I 30 and 54). Finally, the Talmud is more explicit than the Bible regarding the value of the intellectual life and of learning for men in general and for prophets in particular (II 32, 33, 41, III 14, 25, 37, 54). But even the Talmud and Onqelos do not contain the last word regarding the fundamentals as Maimonides indicates by a number of remarks (I 21, 41, II 8–9, 26, 47, III 4–5, 14, 23). One example for each case must suffice. The talmudic Sages follow at least partly the opinion according to which the Law has no other ground than mere Will, whereas "we," says Maimonides, follow the opposite opinion (III 48). "We" is an ambiguous term. As Maimonides has indicated by as it were opening only two chapters (I 62 and 63) with "we," the most important meanings are "we Jews" and "Maimonides." As for Onqelos, he removes through his translation the corporealistic suggestions of the original but he does not make clear what incorporeal things the prophets perceived or what the meaning of a given simile is; this is in accordance with the fact that he translated for the vulgar; but Maimonides explains the similes and he is enabled to do so because of his knowledge of natural science (I 28). Progress beyond Onqelos and the Talmud became possible chiefly for two reasons. In the first place, the ever more deepened effect of the Torah on the Jewish people as well as the rise and political victory of Christianity and Islam have brought it about that the Sabian disease has completely disappeared (III 49, 29). Second, the fundamental verities regarding God are genuinely believed in by nonprophetic men only when they are believed in on the basis of demonstration, but this requires for its perfection that one possess the art of demonstration, and the art of demonstration was discovered by the wise men of Greece or the philosophers, or more precisely by Aristotle (II 15). Even Kalām, i.e., what one may call theology or more precisely the science of demonstrating or defending the roots of the Law, which is directly of Christian origin, owes its origin indirectly to the effect of philosophy on the Law. In spite of its defects, the Kalām is very far from being entirely worthless; and properly understood, as prior to Maimonides it was not, it is even indispensable for the defense of the Law. Kalām entered Judaism long after the talmudic period, in the Gaonic period (I 71, 73). All the more must the introduction of philosophy into Judaism

be regarded as a great progress, if it is introduced in due subordination to the Law or in the proper manner (i.e., as Maimonides introduced it to begin with in his legal works). One must also consider the considerable scientific progress that was made by both Greeks and Muslims after Aristotle's time (II 4, 19). All this does not mean, however, that Maimonides regarded his age as the peak of wisdom. He never forgot the power of what one may call the inverted Sabianism that perpetuates corporealism through unqualified submission to the literal meaning of the Bible and thus even outdoes Sabianism proper (I 31); nor did he forget the disastrous effect of the exile (I 71, II 11): "If the belief in the existence of God were not as generally accepted as it is now in the religions [i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam], the darkness of our times would even be greater than the darkness of the times of the sages of Babylon" (III 29). This is to say nothing of the fact that Sabianism proper was not completely eradicated and could be expected to have a future (cf. I 36). It goes without saying that Maimonides also never forgot the Messianic future, a future that may or may not be followed by the end of the world (cf. I 61 with II 27). In spite of this, one is entitled to say that Maimonides regarded the step that he took in the *Guide* as the ultimate step in the decisive respect, namely, in the overcoming of Sabianism. As he modestly put it, no Jew had written an extant book on the secrets of the Law "in these times of the exile" (I Introd.). At the beginning, the power of Sabianism was broken only in a limited part of the world through bloody wars and through concessions to Sabian habits; those concessions were retracted almost completely by the post-Mosaic prophets, by the Aramaic translators, and by the Talmud, to say nothing of the cessation through violence of the sacrificial service, and the conversion of many pagans, which was assisted by military victories, to Christianity or Islam. Now the time has come when even the vulgar must be taught most explicitly that God is incorporeal. Since the Bible suggests corporealism, the vulgar will thus become perplexed. The remedy for this perplexity is the allegoric explanation of the corporealistic utterances or terms that restores the faith in the truth of the Bible (I 35), i.e., precisely what Maimonides is doing in the *Guide*. But the progress in overcoming Sabianism was accompanied by an ever increasing oblivion of Sabianism and thus by an ever increasing inability to remove the last, as it were, fossilized concessions to Sabianism or relics of Sabianism. Maimonides marks a progress even beyond the post-Mosaic prophets in so far as he combines the open depreciation of the sacrifices with a justification of the sacrificial laws of the Torah, for his depreciation of the sacrifices does not as such mean a denial of the obligatory character of the sacrificial laws. He is the man who finally eradicates Sabianism, i.e., corporealism as the hidden premise of idolatry, through the knowledge of Sabianism recovered by him. He recovered that knowledge

also through his study of Aristotle, who after all belonged to a Sabian society (II 23).

If the *Torah for the Perplexed* thus marks a progress beyond the Torah for the Unperplexed, Maimonides was compelled to draw the reader's attention at an early stage to the difference between the biblical and the post-biblical teaching. In that stage that difference alone was important. Hence to begin with he treats the Bible on the one hand and the post-biblical writings on the other as unities. Generally speaking, he introduces biblical passages by "he says" (or "his saying is") and talmudic passages by "they say" (or "their saying is"). He thus suggests that in the Bible we hear only a single speaker while in the Talmud we hear indeed many speakers who, however, all agree at least in the important respects. Yet in the first chapter of the *Guide* "he" who speaks is in fact first God, then the narrator, then God, and then "the poor one"; in the second chapter "he" who speaks is the narrator, the serpent, God, and so on; God "says" something and the narrator "makes clear and says." But the *Guide* as a whole constitutes an ascent from the common view, or an imitation of the common view, to a discerning view. Accordingly, Maimonides gradually brings out the differences concealed by the stereotyped, not to say ritual, expressions. For instance, in I 32 he introduces each of four biblical quotations by the expression "he indicated by his speech"; only in the last case does he give the name of the speaker, namely, David; the saying of David is somewhat more akin in spirit than the preceding three sayings (of Solomon) to a saying of the talmudic Sages quoted immediately afterward; the talmudic Sages had noted that Solomon contradicted his father David (I Introd. toward the end). In I 34 he introduces by the expression "they say" the saying of a talmudic Sage who tells what "I have seen." The unnamed "he" who, according to I 44, spoke as Jeremiah's providence was Nebuchadnezzar. In I 49 he quotes five biblical passages; in two cases he gives the names of the biblical authors, in one of the two cases adding "may he rest in peace" to the name. In I 70 he introduces a talmudic passage with the expression "They said," while he says at the end of the quotation, "This is literally what he said." Names of biblical teachers occur with unusual frequency in some chapters, the first of which is II 19 and the last of which is III 32. Near the beginning of II 29 Maimonides notes that every prophet had a diction peculiar to him and that this peculiarity was preserved in what God said to the individual prophet or through him. The prophet singled out for extensive discussion from this point of view is Isaiah; thereafter six of the other prophets are briefly discussed in a sequence that agrees with the sequence of their writings in the canon; only in the case of the prophet who occupies the central place (Joel) is the name of the prophet's father added to the name of the prophet. One must also not neglect the references to the difference between the Torah proper and the

Mishneh Torah, i.e., Deuteronomy (cf. II 34–35 and III 24). Maimonides' link with the Torah is, to begin with, an iron bond; it gradually becomes a fine thread. But however far what one may call his intellectualization may go, it always remains the intellectualization of the Torah.

Our desire to give the readers some hints for the better understanding of the second subsection compelled us to look beyond the immediate context. Returning to that context we observe that after Maimonides has concluded the second subsection, he again does something perplexing. The last chapter of the second subsection dealt with "foot"; that passage of the Torah on which the second subsection is based speaks emphatically of God's "face" and His "back"; nothing would have been simpler for Maimonides than to devote the third subsection to terms designating parts of the animate body or of the animal. Instead he devotes the fourth subsection to this subject; the first two chapters of the fourth subsection are devoted precisely to "face" and to "back" (I 37 and 38). The third subsection, which deals with an altogether different subject, thus seems to be out of place or to be a disconcerting insertion. Furthermore, the third subsection is the least exegetic or the most speculative among the subsections devoted to Incorporeality; six of its eight chapters are not lexicographic; five of them are in no obvious sense devoted to the explanation of biblical terms and do not contain a single quotation from the Torah; one of these chapters (I 31) is the first chapter of the *Guide* that does not contain a single Jewish (Hebrew or Aramaic) expression, and another (I 35) does not contain a single quotation of Jewish (biblical or talmudic) passages. One is tempted to believe that it would have been more in accordance with the spirit of the book if the most speculative among the subsections devoted to Incorporeality had formed the end of the part devoted to that subject. In order to understand these apparent irregularities, it is best to start from the consideration that, for the general reason indicated, Maimonides desired to divide each of the seven sections of the *Guide* into seven subsections and that for a more particular reason he decided to treat Unity in three subsections; hence Incorporeality had to be treated in four subsections. Furthermore, it was necessary to place almost all lexicographic chapters within the part treating Incorporeality or conversely it was necessary that the majority of chapters dealing with Incorporeality should be lexicographic. For the reasons given where they had to be given, it proved convenient that the majority of chapters of the first subsection should be nonlexicographic and the majority of chapters of the second subsection should be lexicographic. It is this proportion of the first two subsections that Maimonides decided to imitate in the last two subsections devoted to Incorporeality: the majority of chapters of the third subsection became nonlexicographic and the majority of chapters of the fourth subsection became lexicographic, but – for a reason to be indicated presently – in such a way

that the third subsection is more predominantly nonlexicographic than the first, and the fourth subsection is more predominantly lexicographic than the second. It is reasonable to expect that the distribution of lexicographic and nonlexicographic chapters among the four subsections has some correspondence to the subject matter of those subsections. If one defines their subject matter by reference to the subject matter of their lexicographic chapters, one arrives at this result: the first subsection deals with the specific form, the sexual difference, and generating, while the third subsection deals with sorrow and eating; the second subsection deals chiefly with acts of local motion or rest, while the fourth subsection deals chiefly with the parts of the animate body and sense-perception. To understand this arrangement it suffices both to observe that the first quotation regarding sorrow is "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16) and to read Maimonides' explanation (in I 46) of the relation that links the parts of the animal and its acts to the ends of preservation. Furthermore, it would be a great mistake to believe that the emphasis on sorrow and eating is weakened because these two themes are the only lexicographic themes of the subsection in which they are discussed. Finally, Maimonides used in the most appropriate manner the lexicographic chapters devoted to sorrow and to eating as an introduction to the first series of speculative chapters occurring in the *Guide* and thus brought it about that the third subsection (in contradistinction to the first and the second) ends with nonlexicographic chapters (I 31–36); he thus prepared a similar ending of the fourth subsection (I 46–49); this enabled him to indicate by the position of the next lexicographic chapter (I 70), which is the last lexicographic chapter, as clearly as possible the end of the first section or the fact that I 1–70 form the first section.

The term *ʿaṣab*, which we thought convenient in our context to render by "sorrow," as well as the term "eating," may refer to God's wrath with those who rebel against Him or to His enmity to them. Since His wrath is directed exclusively against idolatry and since His enemies are exclusively the idolaters (I 36), the two terms refer indirectly to idolatry. But "eating" is used also for the acquisition of knowledge. With a view to this second metaphoric meaning of "eating," Maimonides devotes to the subject of human knowledge the five speculative chapters immediately following the explanation of "eating" (I 30). In the last chapter of the subsection (I 36) he reconsiders the prohibition against idolatry on the basis of what had emerged in the five speculative chapters. The third subsection deals then with both idolatry and knowledge in such a way that the discussion of idolatry surrounds the discussion of knowledge. This arrangement affects the discussion of knowledge: Maimonides discusses knowledge with a view to its limitations, to the harm that may come from it and to the dangers attending it.

One can say that the first series of speculative chapters occurring in the *Guide* deals with forbidden knowledge (cf. particularly I 32) – forbidden to all or to most men – within the context of forbidden worship.

The third subsection throws light on the relation between the Bible and the Talmud. Since we have treated this subject before, we limit ourselves to the following remark. In the chapter dealing with "eating," Maimonides explicitly refuses to give an example of the use of the word in its primary meaning: the derivative meaning according to which the word designates the taking of non-corporeal food has become so widespread as to become as it were the primary meaning (cf. the quotation from Isa. 1:20 with Isa. 1:19). Regarding the meaning of "eating" as consuming or destroying, which he illustrates by four quotations from the Torah and two quotations from the prophets, he says that it occurs frequently, namely, in the Bible; regarding the meaning of "eating" as acquiring knowledge, which he illustrates by two quotations from Isaiah and two from the Proverbs, he says that it occurs frequently also in the discourse of the talmudic Sages and he proves this by two quotations. No talmudic quotation had illustrated the meanings of *ʿaṣab*. The talmudic Sages compared the acquisition of knowledge of the divine things to the eating of honey and applied to that knowledge the saying of Solomon: "Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." They thus taught that in seeking knowledge one must not go beyond certain limits: one must not reflect on what is above, what is below, what was before, and what will be hereafter – which Maimonides takes to refer to "vain imaginings" (I 32): Maimonides, who explains what is meant by the fact that man has a natural desire for knowledge (I 34), warns not against the desire for comprehensive knowledge, but against seeming knowledge.

With regard to the fourth subsection, we must limit ourselves to the observation that it is the first subsection that lacks any reference to philosophy or philosophers. On the other hand the expression "in my opinion" (*ʿindī*), which indicates the difference between Maimonides' opinion and traditional opinions, occurs about twice as frequently in the fourth subsection as in the first three subsections taken together. Another substitute is the references to grammarians in I 41 and 43 – references that ought to be contrasted with the parallels in I 8 and 10 – as well as the rather frequent references to the Arabic language. One grammarian is mentioned by name: Ibn Janāḥ, i.e., the Son of Wing who with the help of Arabic correctly interpreted the Hebrew term for "wing" as sometimes meaning "veil" and who may therefore be said to have uncovered "Wing." Another substitute is the reference (in I 42) to an Andalusian interpreter who, in agreement with Greek medicine, had explained as a natural event the apparent

resurrection of the son of a widow by the prophet Elijah. Through his quotations from the Bible in the same chapter Maimonides refers among other things to a severe illness caused by the circumcision of adults as well as to the biblical treatment of leprosy. The chapter in question deals with the Hebrew term for "living"; that term is the only one occurring in the lexicographic chapters of this subsection that is not said to be homonymous; this silence is pregnant with grave implications regarding "the living God" (cf. I 30 and 41).

The last chapter of the fourth subsection is the only chapter of the *Guide* that opens with the expression "The angels." This chapter sets forth the assertion that the angels are incorporeal, i.e., it deals with the incorporeality of something of which there is a plurality. Maimonides thus makes clear that Incorporeality and not Unity is still the theme as it had been from the beginning. The next chapter opens the discussion of Unity. Incorporeality had presented itself as a consequence of Unity; Unity had been the presupposition, an unquestioned presupposition. Unity now becomes the theme. We are told at the beginning that Unity must be understood clearly, not, as it is understood by the Christians, to be compatible with God's trinity, or, more generally stated, with a multiplicity in God (I 50). In the fifth subsection Maimonides effects the transformation of the common, not to say traditional, understanding of Unity, which allowed a multiplicity of positive attributes describing God Himself, into such an understanding as is in accordance with the requirements of speculation. The fifth subsection is the first subsection of the *Guide* that may be said to be entirely speculative. Hence the discussion of Unity, in contradistinction to the discussion of Incorporeality, is characterized by a clear, if implicit, distinction between the speculative and the exegetic discussion of the subject. In the first four subsections there occurred only one chapter without any Jewish expression; in the fifth subsection five such chapters occur. In the first forty-nine chapters there occurred only nine chapters without any quotation from the Torah; in the eleven chapters of the fifth subsection ten such chapters occur. In spite of its speculative character the fifth subsection does not demonstrate that God is one; it continues the practice of the preceding subsections by presupposing that God is one (I 53, 58, 68). Yet from this presupposition it draws all conclusions and not merely the conclusion that God is incorporeal: if God is one, one in every possible respect, absolutely simple, there cannot be any positive attribute of God except attributes describing His actions.

Maimonides knows by demonstration that God is one. The addressee, being insufficiently trained in natural science (cf. I 55 with I 52), does not know Unity by demonstration but through the Jewish tradition and ultimately through the Bible. The most important biblical text is "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4; cf. *M.T.*, H. Yesodei ha-Torah I 7). To our very great

amazement, Maimonides does not quote this verse a single time in any of the chapters devoted to Unity. He quotes it a single time in the *Guide*, imitating the Torah, which, as he says, mentions the principle of Unity, namely, this verse, only once (*Resurrection* 20, 1–2). He quotes the verse in III 45, i.e., the 169th chapter, thus perhaps alluding to the thirteen divine attributes ("merciful, gracious . . .") proclaimed by God to Moses. Whatever else that silence may mean, it certainly indicates the gravity of the change effected by Maimonides in the understanding of Unity. The demonstrated teaching that positive attributes of God are impossible stems from the philosophers (I 59, III 20); it clearly contradicts the teaching of the Law in so far as the Law does not limit itself to teaching that the only true praise of God is silence but it also prescribes that we call God "great, mighty, and terrible" in our prayers. Hence the full doctrine of attributes may not be revealed to the vulgar (I 59) or is a secret teaching. But since that doctrine (which includes the provision that certain points that are made fully clear in the *Guide* are not to be divulged), is set forth with utmost explicitness and orderliness in that book, it is also an exoteric teaching (I 35), if a philosophic exoteric teaching.

As Maimonides indicates, the meaning of "the Lord is one" is primarily that there is no one or nothing similar or equal to Him and only derivatively that He is absolutely simple (cf. I 57 end with I 58). He develops the notion of God's incomparability, of there being no likeness whatsoever between Him and any other being on the basis of quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah as distinguished from the Torah (cf. I 55 with I 54). He is silent here on Deuteronomy 4:35 ("the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him"), on a verse that he quotes in a kindred context in his Code (H. Yesodei ha-Torah I 4) and in different contexts in the *Guide* (II 33, III 32 and 51). Yet absolute dissimilarity or incomparability to everything else is characteristic of nothing as well as of God. What is meant by God's absolute dissimilarity or incomparability is His perfection: it is because He is of incomparable perfection that He is incomparable; it is because He is of unspeakable perfection that nothing positive can be said of Him in strict speech and that everything positive said of Him is in fact (if it does not indicate His actions rather than Himself) only the denial of some imperfection. The meaning of the doctrine of attributes is that God is the absolute perfect being, the complete and perfectly self-sufficient good, the being of absolute beauty or nobility (I 35, 53, 58, 59, 60 end, II 22). If this were not so, Maimonides' doctrine of attributes would be entirely negative and even subversive. For that doctrine culminates in the assertion that we grasp of God only that He is and not what He is in such a manner that every positive predication made of Him, including that He "is," has only the name in common with what we mean when we apply such predications to any being (I 56,

58, 59, 60). If we did not know that God is absolutely perfect, we would ascribe we know not what to what we do not know, in ascribing to Him "being," or we would ascribe nothing to nothing; we certainly would not know what we were talking about. What is true of "being" is true of "one," i.e., of the immediate presupposition of the whole argument of the first section of the *Guide*. Let no one say that Maimonides admits attributes of action as distinguished from the negative attributes; for, not to enter into the question whether this distinction is ultimately tenable (cf. I 59), through the attributes of action God is understood as the cause of certain effects, and it is difficult to see how "cause," if applied to God, can have more than the name in common with "cause" as an intelligible expression. But since we understand by God the absolutely perfect being, we mean the goodness of His creation or governance when we say that He is the "cause" of something (cf. I 46). By his doctrine of attributes Maimonides not only overcomes all possible anthropomorphisms, but also answers the question whether the different perfections that God is said to possess in the highest degree are compatible with one another or whether certain perfections known to us as human perfections – for instance, justice – can be understood to constitute in their absolute form divine perfection: God's perfection is an unfathomable abyss. Thus we understand why the doctrine in question in spite of its philosophic origin can be regarded as the indeed unbiblical but nevertheless appropriate expression of the biblical principle, namely, of the biblical teaching regarding the hidden God who created the world out of nothing, not in order to increase the good – for since He is the complete good, the good cannot be increased by His actions – but without any ground, in absolute freedom, and whose essence is therefore indicated by "Will" rather than by "Wisdom" (III 13).

From the speculative discussion of the divine attributes, which as positive predications about God Himself proved to be mere names, Maimonides turns in the second of the three subsections dealing with Unity to the purely exegetic discussion of the divine names; the exegetic discussion still deals with "the denial of attributes" (I 62 and 65 beginning). It seems that the audible holy names have taken the place of the visible holy images, and it is certain that "name" is connected with "honor" and everything related to honor. The difficulty is caused less by the multiplicity of divine names – for, as the prophet says, in the day of the Lord "the Lord shall be one and his name shall be one" (Zech. 14:9) – than by the fact that this most sacred name, the only divine name antedating creation (I 61), is communicated to men by God (Exod. 6:2–3) and not coined or created by human beings. Since God does not speak, Maimonides must therefore open the whole question of God's speaking, writing, and ceasing to speak or to act (I 65–67). Furthermore, the most sacred name, which is the only name indicating God's essence and which thus

might be thought to lead us beyond the confines of human speculation, is certainly no longer intelligible, since we know very little of Hebrew today (I 61–62). Therefore in the last subsection devoted to Unity (I 68–70), which is the last subsection of the first section, Maimonides returns to speculation. It would be more accurate to say that he now turns to philosophy. In the three chapters in question he refers to philosophy, I believe, more frequently than in the whole discussion of Incorporeality (I 1–49) and certainly more frequently than in the speculative discussion of the attributes (I 50–60); in the exegetic discussion of the divine names (I 61–67), if I am not mistaken, he does not refer to philosophy at all. He now with the support of the philosophers takes up the subject that we cannot help calling the divine attribute of intellect as distinguished from the divine attribute of speech in particular (cf. I 65 beginning). We learn that in God the triad "intellect, intellecting, and the intellected" are one and the same thing in which there is no multiplicity, just as they are one in us when we actually think (I 68). Maimonides does not even allude here to the possibility that "intellect" when applied to God has only the name in common with "intellect" when applied to us. It may be true that God thinks only Himself so that His intellection is only self-intellection and is therefore one and simple in a way in which our intellection cannot be one and simple, but this does not contradict the univocity of "intellect" in its application to God and to us. Self-intellection is what we mean when we speak of God as "living" (cf. I 53). It follows that even "life" is not merely homonymous when applied to God and to us. It likewise follows that what is true of the intellect is not true of the will: the act of willing and the thing willed as willed are not the same as the act of thinking and the thing thought as thought are the same. The reader of the next chapter (I 69) may find this observation useful for understanding Maimonides' acceptance of the philosophic view according to which God is not only the efficient or moving and the final cause of the world but also the form of the world or, in the expression of the Jewish tradition, "the life of the worlds," which he says means "the life of the world."

This must suffice toward making clear the perplexing and upsetting character of Maimonides' teaching regarding Unity. The true state of things is somewhat obscured, to say nothing of other matters, by a certain kind of learning that some readers of the *Guide* can at all times be presumed to possess: the doctrine of attributes restates the Neoplatonic teaching, and Neoplatonism had affected Jewish thinkers long before Maimonides; those thinkers had already succeeded somehow in reconciling Neoplatonism with Judaism. But when different men do the same thing, it is not necessarily the same thing, and Maimonides surely did not do exactly the same thing as the pagan, Islamic, or Jewish Neoplatonists who preceded him. Every open minded and discerning reader must be struck by the

difference between the hidden God of Maimonides' doctrine of attributes and the hidden God who spoke to the Patriarchs and to Moses or, to employ Maimonides' manner of expression, by the difference between the true understanding of God as it was possessed by the Patriarchs and by Moses and the understanding of God on the part of the uninitiated Jews. The result of his doctrine of the divine attributes is that the notion of God that gives life and light to the ordinary believers is not only inadequate or misleading but is the notion of something that simply does not exist – of a merely imaginary being, the theme of deceived and deceiving men (I 60). What is true of the ordinary believer is true at least to some extent of the addressee of the *Guide*. The destruction of the old foundation forces him to seek for a new foundation: he is now compelled to be passionately concerned with demonstration, with the demonstration not only of God's unity but of His very being in a sense of "being" that cannot be entirely homonymous. For now he knows that the being of God is doubtful as long as it is not established by demonstration (I 71). Now he has been brought to the point where he must make up his mind whether or not he will turn altogether to the way of demonstration. Maimonides shows him three ways of demonstrating God's being, unity, and incorporeality: the way of the Kalām, the way of the philosophers, and Maimonides' own way (I 71 end, 76 end, II 1 end). While Maimonides cannot simply accept the philosophers' way, he prefers it to that of the Kalām for the following reason. The Kalām begins, not from the world as we know it through our senses or from the fact that things have determinate natures, but from asserting that what the philosophers call the nature, say, of air is only custom and hence of no inherent necessity: everything could be entirely different from what it is. The Kalām cannot live without reference to what we know through our senses, for in contradistinction to simple belief whose first premise is the absolute will of God, it attempts to demonstrate that God is and hence it must start from the given, and at the same time it must deny the authoritative character of the given. The philosophers on the other hand start from what is given or manifest to the senses (I 71, 73). Maimonides turns first to the analysis and critique of the Kalām-demonstrations. He presents the premises of the Kalām (I 73) and then the Kalām demonstrations that are based on those premises (I 74–76). Maimonides' critique does not limit itself to the technical Kalām reasoning. For instance, the first proof of the createdness of the world and therewith of the being of the Creator assumes that the bodies that we see around us have come into being through an artificer and infers from this that the world as a whole is the work of an artificer. This proof, which does not make any use of the premises peculiar to the Kalām, is based on inability, or at any rate failure, to distinguish between the artificial and the natural. The second proof is based on the premise that no infinite whatever is possible; it

therefore first traces men to a first man, Adam, who came out of dust, which in turn came out of water, and then traces water itself to unqualified nothing out of which water could not have been brought into being except by the act of the Creator (I 74; cf. *Logic* chaps. 7, 8, 11). It is not difficult to recognize in this proof elements of biblical origin. Since the Kalām premises as stated by Maimonides are necessary for the Kalām proofs (I 73 beginning and toward the end) and the Kalām proofs do not in all cases follow from those premises, those premises while necessary are not sufficient. After all, the Kalām selected its premises with a view to proving the roots of the Law: the premise of its premises is those roots. While the First Part ends with the critique of the Kalām, the Second Part opens with "The premises required for establishing the being of God and for demonstrating that He is not a body nor a force in a body and that He is one," i.e., with the premises established by the philosophers. Maimonides thus indicates that the seventy-six chapters of the First Part, which lead up to philosophy through a critique of the popular notions of God as well as of theology, are negative and pre-philosophic, whereas the one hundred and two chapters of the Second and Third Parts are positive or edifying. In other words, the First Part is chiefly devoted to biblical exegesis and to the Kalām, i.e., to the two trans-logical and trans-mathematical subjects mentioned even in the very Epistle Dedicatory.

The Kalām proves that God as the Creator is, is one, and is incorporeal by proving first that the world has been created; but it proves that premise only by dialectical or sophistical arguments. The philosophers prove that God is, is one, and is incorporeal by assuming that the world is eternal, but they cannot demonstrate that assumption. Hence both ways are defective. Maimonides' way consists in a combination of these two defective ways. For, he argues, "the world is eternal – the world is created" is a complete disjunction; since God's being, unity, and incorporeality necessarily follow from either of the only two possible assumptions, the basic verities have been demonstrated by this very fact (I 71, II 2). Yet the results from opposed premises cannot be simply identical. For instance, someone might have said prior to the Second World War that Germany would be prosperous regardless of whether she won or lost the war; if she won, her prosperity would follow immediately; if she lost, her prosperity would be assured by the United States of America who would need her as an ally against Soviet Russia; but the predictor would have abstracted from the difference between Germany as the greatest power which ruled tyrannically and was ruled tyrannically, and Germany as a second-rank power ruled democratically. The God whose being is proved on the assumption of eternity is the unmoved mover, thought that thinks only itself and that as such is the form or the life of the world. The God whose being is proved on the assumption of creation is the biblical God who is characterized by Will and

whose knowledge has only the name in common with our knowledge. If we consider the situation as outlined by Maimonides, we see that what is demonstrated by his way is only what is common to the two different notions of God or what is neutral to the difference between God as pure Intellect and God as Will or what is beyond that difference or what has only the name in common with either Intellect or Will. But God thus understood is precisely God as presented in the doctrine of attributes: Maimonides' demonstration of God's being illumines retroactively his merely assertoric doctrine of attributes. God thus understood can be said to be more extra-mundane not only than the philosophers' God but even than the biblical God; this understanding of God lays the foundation for the most radical asceticism both theoretical and practical (III 51). In other words, both opposite assumptions lead indeed to God as the most perfect being; yet even the Sabians regard their god, i.e., the sphere and its stars, as the most perfect being (III 45); generally stated, everyone understands by God the most perfect being in the sense of the most perfect possible being; the doctrine of attributes understood in the light of its subsequent demonstration leads to God as the most perfect being whose perfection is characterized by the fact that in Him Intelligence and Will are indistinguishable because they are both identical with His essence (cf. I 69). Yet, since the world is of necessity either created or eternal, it becomes necessary to restore the distinction between Intellect and Will. Generally speaking, the *Guide* moves between the view that Intellect and Will are indistinguishable and the view that they must be distinguished (and hence that one must understand God as Intelligence rather than as Will) in accordance with the requirements of the different subjects under discussion (cf. II 25 and III 25). For instance, in his discussion of Omniscience – in the same context in which he reopens the question regarding the relative rank of imagination and intellect – Maimonides solves the difficulty caused by the apparent incompatibility of Omniscience and human freedom (III 17) by appealing to the identity of Intellect and Will, whereas in his discussion of the reasons for the biblical commandments he prefers the view that the commandments stem from God's intellect to the view that they stem from His will.

The reader of the *Guide* must consider with the proper care not only the outline of Maimonides' way but also all its windings. In doing this he must never forget that the demonstration of the basic verities and the discussion of that demonstration is immediately preceded by the discussion of Unity or that the discussion of Unity constitutes the transition from exegesis to speculation. If the world or more precisely the sphere is created, it is indeed self-evident that it was created by some agent but it does not necessarily follow that the creator is one, let alone absolutely simple, and that he is incorporeal. On the other hand, if the sphere is eternal, it follows, as Aristotle has shown, that God is and is incorporeal; but on this

assumption the angels or separate intelligences, each of which is the mover of one of the many spheres, are as eternal as God (cf. I 71, II 2 and 6). It is therefore a question whether monotheism strictly understood is demonstrable. Maimonides does say that Unity and also Incorporeality follow from certain philosophic proofs that do not presuppose either the eternity of the world or its creation, but it is, to say the least, not quite clear whether the proofs in question do not in fact presuppose the eternity of the world (cf. II 2 with II 1). Besides, if there were such proofs, one is tempted to say that there is no need whatever for provisionally granting the eternity of the world in order to demonstrate God's being, unity, and incorporeality, yet Maimonides asserts most emphatically that there is such a need. None of these or similar difficulties is, however, by any means the most serious difficulty. For while the belief in God's unity, being, and incorporeality is required by the Law, that belief, being compatible with the belief in the eternity of the world, is compatible with the unqualified rejection of the Law: the Law stands or falls by the belief in the creation of the world. It is therefore incumbent on Maimonides to show that Aristotle or Aristotelianism is wrong in holding that the eternity of the world has been demonstrated: the eternity of the world which was the basis of the demonstration of God's being, unity, and incorporeality is a dubious assumption. Yet it is not sufficient to refute the claims of Aristotelianism in order to establish the possibility of creation as the Law understands creation, for if the world is not necessarily eternal it may still have been created out of eternal matter. Maimonides is then compelled to abandon or at any rate to refine the disjunction on which his original argument was based. The original disjunction (the world is either eternal or created) is incomplete at least to the extent that it blurs the difference between creation out of matter and creation out of nothing. It brings out the opposition between Aristotle and the Law but it conceals the intermediate possibility presented in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato's version of the doctrine of eternity is not inimical to the Law, for while Aristotle's version excludes the possibility of any miracle, the Platonic version does not exclude all miracles as necessarily impossible. Maimonides does not say which miracles are excluded by the Platonic teaching. Two possible answers suggest themselves immediately. It is according to nature that what has come into being will perish; but according to the Law both Israel and the souls of the virtuous have come into being and will not perish; hence their eternity *a parte post* is a miracle, a miracle that is more in accordance with creation out of nothing than with creation out of eternal matter. Second, God's special providence for Israel, according to which Israel prospers if it obeys and is miserable if it disobeys, is a miracle not likely to be admitted by Plato, whose teaching on providence seems to have been identical with that presented in the Book of Job: providence follows naturally the intelligence of the individual

human being. In accordance with his judgment on the relation between the Aristotelian doctrine and the doctrine of the Law, Maimonides proves by an extensive argument that the Aristotelian doctrine is not demonstrated and is in addition not probable. As for the Platonic doctrine, he explicitly refuses to pay any attention to it on the additional ground that it has not been demonstrated (II 13, 25–7, 29, III 18; *Yemen* 24, 7–10; *Resurrection* 23, 16–24, 17; *Letter on Astrology* §§ 19 ff. Marx). That ground is somewhat strange because according to Maimonides the Aristotelian and the biblical alternatives have not been demonstrated either. In his critique of the Aristotelian doctrine he makes use of the Kalām argument based on a premise that so defines the possible that it might be either the imaginable or the non-self-contradictory or that regarding which we cannot make any definite assertions because of our lack of knowledge; the premise in question excludes the view according to which the possible is what is capable of being or what is in accordance with the nature of the thing in question or with what possesses an available specific substratum (cf. I 75, II 14, III 15). The reader must find out what the premises of the preferred premise are, how Maimonides judges of those premises, and whether the argument based on the premise in question renders improbable not only the eternity of the visible universe but the eternity of matter as well. At any rate, being compelled to question the Aristotelian doctrine, Maimonides is compelled to question the adequacy of Aristotle's account of heaven. That questioning culminates in the assertions that Aristotle had indeed perfect knowledge of the sublunar things but hardly any knowledge of the things of heaven and ultimately that man as man has no such knowledge: man has knowledge only of the earth and the earthly things, i.e., of beings that are bodies or in bodies. In the words of the Psalmist (115:16): "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of Man." Accordingly, Maimonides suggests that the truth regarding providence, i.e., that theological truth which is of vital importance to human life, comes to sight by the observation of the sublunar phenomena alone. Even the proof of the First Mover of heaven, i.e., the philosophic proof of God's being, unity, and incorporeality, to say nothing of the being of the other separate intelligences, becomes a subject of perplexity (II 22, 24; cf. II 3, 19, III 23). And yet it was knowledge of heaven that was said to supply the best proof, not to say the only proof, of the being of God (II 18). Maimonides had said earlier that very little demonstration is possible regarding divine matters and much of it regarding natural matters (I 31). Now he seems to suggest that the only genuine science of beings is natural science or a part of it. It is obvious that one cannot leave it at this apparent suggestion. The least that one would have to add is that the strange remarks referred to occur within the context in which Maimonides questions Aristotle's account of heaven in the name of astronomy or, more precisely,

in which he sets forth the conflict between philosophic cosmology and mathematical astronomy – that conflict which he calls "the true perplexity": the hypotheses on which astronomy rests cannot be true and yet they alone enable one to give an account of the heavenly phenomena in terms of circular and uniform motions. Astronomy shows the necessity of recurring for the purpose of calculation and prediction to what is possible in a philosophically inadmissible sense (II 24).

We have been compelled to put a greater emphasis on Maimonides' perplexities than on his certainties, and in particular on his vigorous and skillful defense of the Law, because the latter are more easily accessible than the former. Besides, what at first glance seems to be merely negative is negative only in the sense in which every liberation, being a liberation not only to something but also from something, contains a negative ingredient. So we may conclude with the words of Maimonides with which we began: The *Guide* is "a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. When those gates are opened and those places are entered, the souls will find rest therein, the bodies will be eased of their toil, and the eyes will be delighted."

Leo Strauss

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE PHILOSOPHIC SOURCES OF
The Guide of the Perplexed

*

MAIMONIDES (1135–1204) wrote *The Guide of the Perplexed* in his mature age, after he had composed several works on the halakhah (notably *Mishneh Torah*) and also one treatise on logic, a juvenile effort, entitled *Sināʿat al-manṭiq*, "the art of logic," but better known under the Hebrew name *Milloth Ha-higgayon*. As far as the method of exposition is concerned, there is a striking difference between *Mishneh Torah* and the *Guide of the Perplexed*,[1] in which the earlier work is repeatedly referred to. In the *Mishneh Torah* Maimonides set out to produce order – a systematic, lucid, and authoritative legal code – out of the chaotic disorder of talmudic literature, and he succeeded most admirably in this undertaking. In the *Guide*, on the other hand, the systematic expositions of the Aristotelian philosophers are often dislocated and broken up; sometimes wholly unconnected subjects are brought together; in a word, order is turned into disorder. As Maimonides explains in his Introduction this was done for good and sufficient reasons and does not, by any means, indicate that he had lost his gift for lucid exposition. Indeed this gift is brilliantly displayed in certain passages of the *Guide*, for instance in the formulation of the premises of the Mutakallimūn (I 73) and of the premises of the philosophers (beginning of Part II).

The peculiar method used by Maimonides in composing his work is perhaps the main reason for the disconcerting impression it is apt to produce at first upon most of its readers. This impression was certainly aimed at by Maimonides. His book's impact depends upon it. However, the educated public of Maimonides'

1. See Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," in *Essays on Maimonides; An Octocentennial Volume*, ed. S. W. Baron (New York, 1941), pp. 37–91.

times was better prepared than modern readers to grasp intentions hinted at in veiled language and doctrines deliberately obscured by an extremely unsystematic method of exposition, for the philosophic tradition upon which Maimonides drew was much easier of access in those days, as its study was included in a relatively widely used curriculum. The additional difficulties with which the present-day reader of this text is faced cannot accordingly be readily overcome. Nevertheless, after a few general remarks, indications, which may prove helpful, will be given concerning Maimonides' philosophic sources, his evaluation of them, and the way in which he utilizes them.

The Introduction to the *Guide* makes it clear that philosophic science may be dangerous; that the study of philosophy, or of its rudiments, may bring about that state of perplexity – due to an unresolved conflict between religious tradition and nonreligious knowledge – which gives the book its name; that strict precautions must be taken with a view to keeping the average reader, who is also an average man, in the dark concerning the philosophic solution propounded by Maimonides. Philosophy is thus regarded as a dangerous temptation and as a very potent one at that. From Maimonides' point of view the fascination it exercises can easily be accounted for. It is the fascination of truth. Maimonides was in a difficult predicament not so much because of the belief that he claims to hold that there can be no intellectually convincing answer to certain crucial questions, such as the temporal creation of the world, but because of his certainties; he knew, because his reason told him so, that for the greater part the Aristotelian doctrines were wholly true.

This does not merely mean that he regarded these doctrines as adequate for only a certain imperfect state of scientific knowledge. Historicism did not bedevil him as it does our contemporaries, at least not to the same extent. He recognized that sciences may progress and have done so in the past, but considered that some of them, for instance sublunar physics, were complete and perfect, being incapable of further progress except perhaps in details. He also considered that this was not merely a matter of personal opinion and would, no doubt, have held the modern question that concerns itself with what Maimonides really believed as nugatory or a red herring. The Introduction is avowedly to a large extent a study in the art of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. But it is not his personal opinions that Maimonides primarily wishes to conceal from the insufficiently gifted or uneducated readers; he does not want to put them on the track of the secrets of the universe. And, conversely, his hints, his veiled language, and also the lucid expositions he sometimes inserts, are not meant in the first place to enable the sufficiently qualified readers to discover what were the beliefs sincerely held by Maimonides, but to give them an inkling of the true nature of things. This kind of knowledge was

not Maimonides' personal discovery. He had no wish to be an innovator in either physics or metaphysics;[2] in fact he expressly disclaims any pretension to putting forward in the *Guide* an original philosophic doctrine.[3] This need not mean that no discoveries were any longer possible. He did, however, hold the conviction that, in regard to essentials the Aristotelian philosophy provides a system of knowledge, in part certainly true and in part more or less probable, that embodies the supreme achievements of the human intellect when geared to its highest form of activity.

This system is not accepted by Maimonides or by any other important philosopher on trust, but for good rational reasons. It is, however, accepted; which means that Aristotle's works, the commentaries on them, and the various interpretations of the Philosopher's opinions acquire considerable importance. There were many forms of Aristotelianism, and it may be a fruitful line of inquiry to try to define and, if necessary, to identify the philosophic influences that helped Maimonides to form the conceptions set forth in the *Guide* and, additionally, to indicate his own attitude to the various Peripatetic schools, which had incorporated many doctrines alien to Aristotle. The avowedly non-Aristotelian philosophic and kalām sources that Maimonides used when writing the *Guide* will also be investigated.

As we shall see later on, a considerable amount of information concerning Maimonides' sources and his way of using them is provided by the *Guide* itself. However we shall begin this investigation with another text of Maimonides, a letter written by him in Arabic to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, the translator of the *Guide* into Hebrew, which gives us invaluable indications regarding Maimonides' attitude toward earlier philosophers.

The letter has come down to us in several Hebrew versions, two of which have been edited by A. Marx in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (see N.S. XXV, pp. 374 ff.; the relevant passages occur on pp. 378–80). Both versions have been utilized in the excerpts that are given here.

"The writings [literally: words] of Aristotle's teacher Plato are in parables and hard to understand. One can dispense with them, for the writings of Aristotle suffice, and we need not occupy [our attention] with the writings of earlier [philosophers]. Aristotle's intellect [represents] the extreme of human intellect, if we except those who have received divine inspiration."

"The works of Aristotle are the roots and foundations of all works on the sciences. But they cannot be understood except with the help of commentaries, those of Alexander of Aphrodisias, those of Themistius, and those of Averroes."

2. From a modern point of view he might, however, be held to have had new ideas on the philosophy of history.
3. See II 2. Evidently this does not mean that he wished to confine himself altogether to transcribing the philosophic opinions of his predecessors. On matters of detail, he sometimes sets forth opinions of his own.

"I tell you: as for works on logic, one should only study the writings of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. All his writings are faultlessly excellent. One ought to study and understand them. For he is a great man."

"Though the work of Avicenna may give rise to objections and are not as [good] as those of Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī],[4] Abū Bakr[5] al-Ṣā'igh [Ibn Bājja] was also a great philosopher, and all his writings are of a high standard."

Furthermore, Maimonides states his opinion (which has proved to be correct) that two works attributed to Aristotle, the *Book of the Apple* and the *Book of the Golden Palace*, are pseudepigraphs.

He advises against studying the commentaries on Aristotle of the Christian authors al-Ṭayyib, Yaḥyā Ibn ᶜAdī, and Yaḥyā al-Biṭrīq. To read them would be a sheer waste of time.

He also states that he has no use for Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's *Book of Divine Science* and for Isaac Israeli's *Book of Definitions* and *Book of Elements*. He regards both authors as mere physicians (and no philosophers).

Isaac Israeli was a Jew. The only other Jewish philosopher named in this letter is Joseph Haṣṣadiq. Maimonides informs his correspondent that he has not read Haṣṣadiq's *Microcosm*, but was personally acquainted with the author and appreciated his learning. According to Maimonides, he adhered to the teaching of the Brethren of Purity, an observation implying criticism. For the authors of the philosophic encyclopedia entitled the *Epistles of the Brethren* were held in but slight esteem by the rigorous Aristotelian philosophers.

These evaluations may be taken as expressing the real opinion of Maimonides. At least, there is no reason for thinking otherwise. Furthermore, the evidence of the letter is sometimes corroborated by direct or oblique references occurring in the *Guide* to the philosophers mentioned in the letter or to their teaching. Conversely, the letter may sometimes help to interpret such references. In this way, the history of philosophy as conceived by Maimonides falls into focus.

This history is considered from a strictly Peripatetic point of view, which accepts unquestionably the supremacy of Aristotle. Indeed, Maimonides' description of the latter's intellectual powers calls to mind those of Maimonides' contemporary, Averroes. But Averroes' remarks are much more hyperbolic and put much greater emphasis on the uniqueness of Aristotle, on his overwhelming superiority over all philosophers – Plato included, whom Averroes sums up in even more disobliging fashion than does Maimonides. According to Averroes, the sciences

4. Another version of this passage reads: "Though the works of [Abū] ᶜAlī Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] manifest great accuracy and subtle study, they are not as [good] as the work of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī."

5. The manuscript text has Abū Naṣr, a corruption that the peculiarities of the Arabic script render easily explicable.

of logic, physics, and metaphysics were brought by Aristotle to a state of supreme perfection.[6] Such affirmations of the unchallengeable pre-eminence of Aristotle over all other philosophers may be peculiar to the philosophic tradition of Spain and the Maghrib, a tradition in which Maimonides was brought up, as he sometimes, perhaps with a trace of intellectual arrogance, points out. The superiority of Aristotle over Plato was much less evident in the Moslem East.

There is no reason to doubt that Maimonides was acquainted with all the writings of Aristotle known in Moslem Spain, i.e., practically the whole *Corpus Aristotelicum* as we know it. Only one major work was lacking, Aristotle's *Politics*.[7] It is, moreover, abundantly clear that, from an early age, Maimonides had lived with these texts and that they formed a notable part of his intellectual makeup. Indubitably he sometimes drew upon them directly, rather than upon the commentaries and later accounts of the Peripatetic doctrine. This may, for instance, be the case in the exposition of the twenty-five philosophic premises at the beginning of Part II of the *Guide*. These facts give significance to his choice of the not very many explicit textual quotations from Aristotle that he makes in the *Guide*.

Aristotle

If we abstract from a number of passages citing Aristotelian texts (such as the reference to the *Physics* in *Guide* III 10 and to the *Nicomachean Ethics* in III 43), which, in the main, appear merely to enounce a scientific proposition or to impart information without alluding to Aristotle's personal attitude toward his investigations and conclusions or to his moral evaluations, the following textual, but not always accurate, quotations may be considered.

In the first reference to Aristotle that occurs in the *Guide* (I 5) he is called the Chief of the Philosophers.[8] But the paraphrastic quotation from *De Caelo* that follows upon this honorific appellation has apologetic overtones. Aristotle bids the reader not to ascribe his engaging in (arduous) speculation to temerity, but to his eagerness to acquire, as far as human capacity permits, a correct view of things. Another quotation from this work of Aristotle (*Guide* II 14) refers to the universally held belief that the heaven is eternal. As Maimonides points out, Aristotle wishes

6. See S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe* (Paris, 1927), pp. 316 and 441.
7. Averroes states that it was unknown in Spain and the Maghrib, but believes that it was available in the Islamic East.
8. Moses, on the other hand, is designated in the *Guide* (I 54, III 12, and III 54) as the *Master of those who know*, an evidently higher rank. But in the contexts in which this appellation appears he is not – at least in an obvious way – opposed to Aristotle. The title might clearly have fitted the latter, to whom it is applied by Dante (*Divina Commedia, Inferno*, IV, 131), perhaps because of some recollection of the appellation used by Maimonides, which he might have encountered in a Latin translation of the *Guide*.

to strengthen his case by a recourse to the universal consensus. A third passage from *De Caelo*[9] quoted in the *Guide* (II 15) gives *inter alia* the Philosopher's reasons for citing the arguments of his opponents. If his own had been the only ones he set forth, they would have made a feebler impression upon the readers. One has to be equitable. This quotation is preceded in the same chapter by one from Aristotle's *Physics* (the same passage is also referred to in *Guide* II 13) asserting that, with the single exception of Plato, all natural philosophers who lived before Aristotle believed that motion is not subject to coming-to-be and passing-away, a statement interpreted by Maimonides as an appeal, with regard to a problem that reasoning was unable to solve, to the authority of the earlier philosophers. This interpretation appears to be corroborated by a quotation from the *Topics*, likewise figuring in *Guide* II 15, which, *prima facie*, in spite of al-Fārābī's different explanation, seems to indicate that in Aristotle's opinion no valid answer could be given to the question whether the world was eternal.

A further quotation from *De Caelo*, occurring in *Guide* II 19, gives a more extensive and more accurate version of the passage referred to in I 5 and is, accordingly, like the latter, more or less apologetic in tone. At least, this is the general opinion. The Philosopher admits that he tried to solve very difficult questions, but rejects the imputation of foolhardiness that might be directed against him on this account and claims that his attempts deserve admiration. Any plausible conclusion that he reaches ought to be greeted with joy.

A quotation from the *Physics* in *Guide* II 20 gives Aristotle's reasons for rejecting the opinion that the heavens have come into being spontaneously.

A quotation from the *Ethics*, which should also be mentioned with reference to Maimonides' indirect portrayal of Aristotle, is of a different nature. The *Guide* cites several times (II 36, 40; III 8, 49) a short sentence from the *Nicomachean Ethics* affirming the shamefulness of the sense of touch. This quotation is used to corroborate what appears to have been Maimonides' personal opinion; qua philosopher, though not qua teacher of the halakhah, he favored asceticism.

To go back to the quotations from the Aristotelian books on the natural sciences and from the *Topics*, many of them, a very considerable proportion of the total number – namely, all those referred to above, with the exception of the passage from the *Physics* occurring in *Guide* II 20 – fall into one pattern. They

9. Or rather from its Arabic version, in which the Greek text is somewhat altered. It may be noted that, if one abstracts from variations clearly due to errors of scribes, the quotations from *De Caelo* in *Guide* II 15 and 19 are practically identical with the corresponding passages of the Arabic translation of this work of Aristotle edited by A. Badawi (Cairo, 1961). The quotation in *Guide* II 15 figures on p. 196 of this edition and the quotation in *Guide* II 19 on pp. 269–70. The identity of the translator responsible for this version is not known for certain.

serve to build up an image of Aristotle regarded as an earnest seeker of truth tentatively propounding more or less plausible theories. As Maimonides twice points out in the *Guide*, once in II 19 with reference to the quotation from *De Caelo* and the second time in II 24, the science of mathematics was in an imperfect state in Aristotle's time (a fact that invalidates that philosopher's astronomical theories) and has progressed since then.[10]

The unassuming *persona* of Aristotle suggested by some of the quotations in the *Guide* is used by Maimonides to good effect in the fight he puts up against the overbearing claim of the Aristotelian system to contain the whole, or almost the whole, of truth knowable to man. I believe that to some extent this was shadow-boxing. The references to *De Caelo* in *Guide* I 5 and II 19 concern the theory of astronomy and of celestial physics, disciplines that orthodox Aristotelians had no reason to consider with complacency and self-satisfaction. Indeed the fact that the Ptolemaic system accepted by the majority of astronomers was incompatible with Aristotelian physics was a *skandalon* of science. A strictly orthodox Aristotelian like Averroes was as aware of this fact as Maimonides; though, contrary to the latter, he was not, as we shall see, prepared to believe that the true science of astronomy was beyond human ken, or that at least no theory concerning the celestial spheres could be held to be as certain as the science of terrestrial physics expounded by Aristotle. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the "order of nature" and a "conformity to the nature of existence," i.e., an intrinsic rationality that accounts for the possibility of a scientific explanation, do not subsist in the heavenly as well as the sublunar phenomena. The affirmation of such a rationality, which is a fundamental position of Maimonides as it enables him to reject the doctrines of the theologians of the kalām (see below), does not depend upon the existence of an adequate astronomical theory. These are two separate issues, though Maimonides may have sometimes deliberately confused them.

The quotations from *De Caelo* in II 14 and 15 as well as the quotation from the *Physics* and that from the *Topics* in the latter chapter involve the even graver question of the eternity or temporal creation of the world. Maimonides makes out quite a good case for this contention, suggested by these quotations, that in so far as the Aristotelian proof of the eternity of the world is dependent on physics it has not the force of a demonstration. Maimonides' own position on this issue may have depended on his conception of God. Of this more hereafter.

10. This observation was probably often made in Maimonides' times in Spain. For an animated debate was taking place in that country in consequence of the criticism directed by faithful Aristotelians against the partisans of the Ptolemaic system. On the incompatibility of this system with Aristotelian physics, see below.

Alexander of Aphrodisias

The unified all-embracing system of physics and metaphysics that Maimonides knew and, to a large extent, adopted was in the last analysis based on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. However, before the Arabic philosophers took over, it was largely Alexander of Aphrodisias who gave it the coherence that in several respects it had lacked, tying up many of its loose ends and propounding solutions to points that were left obscure. In his letter to Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides refers to him and to Themistius as being the two Greek commentators of Aristotle who ought to be consulted. In the *Guide*, however, he quotes Themistius only once (see I 71), and the sentence he cites is a mere echo of Aristotle, whereas there is considerable evidence to show that his personal point of view and his conception of Aristotelianism were decisively influenced by Alexander. Moreover it would seem that he was aware of this fact.

There are several explicit textual quotations from Alexander in the *Guide*, and they have considerable importance. In other passages his writings are, as far as we can judge, or as we may suppose, alluded to or drawn upon without his name being mentioned. There are also possibly some references to the works of this commentator that we are not in a position to identify, as Maimonides may have been acquainted with lost treatises of Alexander or treatises extant only in manuscript in an Arabic translation, and that have not yet been edited or studied.

The works of Alexander fall into two categories: commentaries on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, and independent treatises. It may be taken as certain that Maimonides made extensive use of the commentaries. This may be inferred not only from the reference to them in the letter to Ibn Tibbon,[11] but also from the fact that the Spanish Aristotelians, whose philosophic education was probably similar to Maimonides', held the commentaries in high esteem: thus Ibn Bājja regards Alexander as the best of the commentators, and Averroes quotes extensively from his commentaries.

11. It is true that he also refers in this letter to the commentaries of his contemporary Averroes, which he apparently did not use when writing the *Guide* (see below); but the analogy does not apply, as Maimonides' only reason for not consulting the commentaries of Averroes was that they were not as yet available to him. It seems probable that, in his exposition of the "second philosophic speculation" in *Guide* II 1, Maimonides followed one of the commentaries of Alexander rather than the two Aristotelian texts, *Metaphysics* xii. 7, and *Physics* viii. 5, which deal with this speculation. Alexander's commentary, as quoted by Averroes, on the chapter of the *Metaphysics* has certain points in common with the text of the *Guide*. Unfortunately, his commentary on the *Physics* is lost. It may be noted that the speculation in question occurs also in Alexander's treatise *On the Principles of the All*, which is discussed below (pp. 257 f. of Badawi's edition; see below n. 15), but the text of his commentary on the *Metaphysics* seems to have a closer connection with the passage in *Guide* II 1.

Nevertheless it is a fact that Maimonides' textual quotations from Alexander are drawn not from his commentaries but from two of his treatises: the treatise *On Governance* (*Maqāla fi'l-tadbīr*), which appears to be identical with an as yet unpublished manuscript treatise of Alexander entitled *On Providence* (*Fi'l-ᶜināya*), and the treatise *On the Principles of the All* (*Fī mabādīʾ al-kull*). The Greek originals of both treatises are lost.

The treatise *On Providence*, as I shall refer to it, this being the more usual title, affords an instructive illustration both of the capital importance of Alexander's writings for the formation of the medieval system of Peripatetic philosophy and of the way in which Maimonides utilized his sources. I shall deal with the second point first.

In III 17, Maimonides sets forth five opinions concerning providence: (1) the Epicurean; (2) the Aristotelian; (3) the Ashᶜarite (i.e., that professed by a school of kalām that represents and already represented in Maimonides' times the official theology of Sunnite Islam); (4) the Muᶜtazilite (professed by another kalām school); (5) that of Jewish law, from which Maimonides apparently differentiates his own opinion, likewise expounded in this chapter.

The first of these opinions are, as far as their doctrinal content is concerned, identical with opinions referred to in Alexander's treatise *On Providence*, as quoted by the tenth-century Jewish scholar Ibn Abī Saᶜīd.[12] Two of these opinions, the Epicurean[13] and the Aristotelian, belong to the philosophers to whom they are attributed by Maimonides. However, with regard to the ascription of the third doctrine, which professes that God watches over all things, both the general and the particular, there is an interesting discrepancy. According to Alexander, this is Plato's view, whereas Maimonides attributes it to the Ashᶜarites. Maimonides clearly adapted the statement of his source to the historical circumstances of his own times. It may be conjectured that he did not wish to confer philosophic respectability on the Ashᶜarites by suggesting that their opinion was identical with Plato's. In this chapter of the *Guide*, Alexander is cited only in connection with the Aristotelian view, and there is no mention of the title of the treatise quoted. It may, however, be presumed that it is the treatise referred to in III 16 under the name *On Governance* (*Fi'l-tadbīr*) and that, as already stated, this work is identical with Alexander's treatise *On Providence* (*Fi'l-ᶜināya*).

The sixteenth chapter sets forth various opinions concerning God's knowledge, a problem that, in Maimonides' view, is bound up with that of providence. One of these opinions, which is quoted from Alexander, closely parallels that ascribed

12. See S. Pines, "A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XXIV (1955), 123 ff.
13. Which, according to Alexander, is also that of Democritus.

to the Ashʿarites in the seventeenth chapter. For its partisans hold that God knows all things, nothing being hidden from Him. As stated by Maimonides with an explict reference to Alexander, these partisans were "great men prior in time to Aristotle." A legitimate inference seems to be that Maimonides does not wish to mention in connection with this opinion (any more than in connection with the parallel opinion concerning providence) the name of Plato, which in all probability occurred in this context in Alexander's text.

In fine, Maimonides follows his source faithfully as long as this suits his book, but has no qualms about adapting and altering it when this may serve his intentions. A comparison of the treatise *On Providence* with the relevant chapters of the *Guide* exemplifies this method in a particularly clear way; but it may be supposed that Maimonides used it also with regard to other sources. These chapters also illustrate the influence Alexander had on Maimonides' views of Aristotelianism, which he tended to identify with philosophy *tout court*. It was both a direct influence and an indirect one – channeled through the writings of various Arabic philosophers.

There is no evidence to show that Aristotle put forward the view regarding providence ascribed to him by Alexander and Maimonides, i.e., the view that divine providence extends only to the celestial spheres up to the sphere of the Moon inclusively, but does not watch over the sublunar world. It is true that this opinion is inspired by Aristotle's way of thinking and is faithful to the spirit of his system. But Aristotle probably did not feel the need to take so clear a stand in the matter; in all probability, the doctrine in question was enunciated several centuries later by Alexander and other Peripatetics (some of whom may have preceded him), at a time when in the face of the pointed formulations of the Stoics concerning divine providence, the rival schools also had to state their position clearly.

The Peripatetic doctrine could be described as a halfway house between the Epicurean negation of teleology in nature and the Stoic proclamation of an all-embracing providence. But it differs from either of these schools in an essential point: it affirms the eternity of the cosmos and of the cosmic order, whose preservation may (it is a question of terminology) be attributed to divine providence. But as far as individual beings and individual events are concerned, it denies any intervention of providence. However, the Aristotelian doctrine was opposed to the Epicurean on yet another point. It considered that through intellectual activity some men, the happy few, may and should transcend the limitations of human nature, or at least of human nature as it is commonly conceived. As the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which was well known to Maimonides, puts it[14] (x. vii. 8. 1177b

14. The passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* quoted here are translated by H. Rackham.

30 ff.): "If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him." And again (x. viii. 13. 1179a28 ff.): "It seems likely that the man who pursues intellectual activity, and who cultivates his intellect and keeps that in the best condition, is also the man most beloved of the gods. For, if, as is generally believed, the gods exercise some supervision over human affairs, then it will be reasonable to suppose that they take pleasure in that part of man which is best and most akin to themselves, namely, the intellect, and that they recompense with their favors those men who esteem and honor this most, because these care for the things dear to themselves, and act rightly and nobly. Now it is clear that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man. He therefore is most beloved by the gods; and if so, he is naturally most happy."

Whatever the correct interpretation of the reference to the gods may be, it is clear that Aristotle's position, as set forth in the second passage, foreshadows, and may account for, Maimonides' view that the human individual's share in divine providence is proportionate to his intellectual powers and that providence does not watch over the nonrational animals (see *Guide* III 17 and 51).

Thus Maimonides' opinion concerning providence appears to be a combination of the Aristotelian conception of the intellect with Alexander's version of what this commentator holds to be the Aristotelian view of providence. In other words, it is a combination of two Peripatetic doctrines.

Alexander's treatise *On the Principles of the All*, of which at least two Arabic versions, one of them published,[15] have been preserved, is in a way a much more important work than the treatise *On Providence*. For it seems to represent Alexander's most ambitious attempt to systematize Aristotle's physical as well as some of his metaphysical doctrines.

One of the two explicit quotations from this work occurring in the *Guide* mentions the title of the commentator's treatise; the other merely cites the name of Alexander. Neither of them refers to the doctrinal contents of the treatise. In the quotation referred to in the second place (see *Guide* I 31), Alexander enumerates the three causes of differences of opinion (to which, as the context makes it clear, erroneous doctrines are to be imputed; see Badawi's edition of Alexander's treatise, p. 276). These causes are: (1) lust for power, which prevents men from grasping the truth; (2) the fact that certain things are in themselves difficult to grasp; (3) the intellectual incapacity of certain men. Maimonides adds to this passage the

15. By A. Badawi, in *Arisṭū ʿinda'l-ʿArab* (Cairo, 1947), pp. 253–77.

observation that "in our times" a fourth cause is operative, one that was not mentioned by Alexander because it did not exist at that time. The cause in question is constituted by habit and education, under the influence of which men cling to what they are accustomed to. In other words, Maimonides contrasts his own times, which he seems to have held to be dominated by superstition, to use Spinoza's term and that of the philosophers of Enlightenment, with Greek antiquity, in which the philosophers who aspired to know the true nature of things did not have to struggle against the dead hand of traditional belief. Maimonides was indubitably aware that the Greek philosophers lived in a pagan society, i.e., a society with religious beliefs and observances of its own, but apparently he chose not to mention this fact.[16]

The other explicit quotation from the *Principles of the All*, the one mentioning the title of this treatise, occurs in II 3. According to the *Guide*, Alexander states in this text that though the opinion of Aristotle regarding the causes of the motions of the spheres – i.e., the opinion from which he deduced the existence of separate intellects – are mere undemonstrated assertions, they are, of all the opinions put forward on the subject, those that give rise to the smallest number of doubts and that lend themselves best to being systematized.

This view is clearly in line with the image of Aristotle that, as has been shown, Maimonides appears to have tried to build up through his choice of quotations from the *Corpus Aristotelicum* – the first general impression being one of philosophers on the defensive. For one gathers that neither Aristotle nor Alexander was absolutely certain of the correctness of his system of physics. This is, of course, true. But their position has implications different from those indicated in the *Guide*, as a reference to Alexander's text will show. Maimonides certainly did not miss these implications, and I believe that he was in general agreement with these philosophers regarding the conclusions to be drawn.[17]

16. In III 29 and elsewhere, Maimonides speaks at length of the absurdly superstitious beliefs and observances that were prevalent in the pagan communities of the ancient East, designated by him as the Sabians. This point is of capital importance for his interpretation of history, as it explains and justifies Abraham's revolt against the traditions of his community and in addition throws light on Moses' intentions in promulgating the Law and accounts for many of its provisions. Maimonides does not, however, refer in that context to the pagan Greeks, though they, as well as the ancient Babylonians and various other communities, were designated as Sabians. However, in II 39, in fine, Maimonides puts "the nomoi of the Greeks" in the same category as "the ravings of the Sabians," but in the context this does not necessarily mean that he regards the first as being on a par with the second.
17. However, his awareness of the difficulties inherent in the philosophic explanation seems to have been sharper than that of the two Greek thinkers. And he had of course to take into account the challenge presented by the unscientific, but from a certain point of view irrefutable, view that God created the universe by an absolutely arbitary act of free will and that He sometimes intervenes with similar acts in the concatenation of causes and effects that constitutes the order of nature.

The two passages of Alexander's *Principles* that set forth the view referred to by Maimonides may be translated as follows (p. 253 of Badawi's edition): "I shall say: Things of this kind[18] are, in my opinion, best explained if one points out that the agreed upon principles are in accord with, and adhere to, the manifest, clearly apparent, and well-known phenomena.[19] For in this matter it is impossible to use the way of demonstration.[20] For demonstration must start with prior things and with the causes, whereas nothing is prior to the first principles; nor do they have a cause." (*Ibid.*, 276): "It is in this way that – [speaking] concisely and [referring] only to the principle[21] – the government of the universe is conducted, according to what we have taken over from the divine Aristotle. Everything that is in it preserves its peculiar nature and accomplishes[22] the functions that were given to this nature in particular within the eternity and order of the universe. This opinion is not only more than any other in accord with the divine government; it is also the one that more than any other is appropriate for speculation and that is verified because of its agreement with, and close relation to, the things visible to the cognizing [subject].[23] Everyone who philosophizes should, whatever the circumstances, use this opinion and prefer it to all others. For it is[24] the most correct of all the opinions that have been propounded concerning God, the Great and Sublime, and concerning the divine body.[25] It alone among the various opinions preserves the coherence and the order of the things that are produced because of this coherence and order. If it should occur to anyone that some [point] among those that we have set forth requires further and more subtle investigation, he should not, because of a slight difficulty that might become manifest, bring about a slackening of our vigilance and our effort [directed] toward defending this opinion in its totality. [He ought not to do this], even if [this opinion] is obnoxious and repugnant to him. On the contrary, we ought not only to stick to this opinion, but also to defend it. For of all the opinions that have been held concerning God, the Great and the Sublime, it is the one most appropriate to Him. The truth is that we seek to refute[26] all the opinions opposed to it and to correct, as far as we are able, their errors. [We shall do this] after having first stated that it is difficult to find a speculative opinion exempt from doubts."

18. Apparently: the principles of the physical world. 19. Literally: things.
20. Literally: the demonstrative speeches.
21. Literally: by the way of principle and concisely. 22. Literally: follows.
23. P. 276, l. 10, reading: *li'l-ʿālim*. Perhaps the text should be emended to: *fi'l-ʿālam*, "in the world."
24. P. 276, l. 11: Instead of *aw kānat*, I read: *idh kāna*.
25. I.e., the heavenly sphere.
26. P. 276, l. 17: *k.l.* makes no sense in the context. One could expect *radd* (refutation) or some other word having a similar meaning. My translation is based on this emendation.

This passage is followed in Alexander's treatise by the passage on the causes of differences of opinion quoted in the *Guide*. Evidently this portion of the work has been much pondered over by Maimonides.

The two texts that have been quoted give Alexander's views on the function and degree of verifiability of physical theories. The Peripatetic first principles cannot be demonstrated, as demonstration involves a recourse to some prior principle, but their use in scientific theory can be justified on the ground that they account for and correlate a great number of facts and observations. The model of the cosmos that Aristotelianism provides is more coherent and has more intrinsic verisimilitude than those proposed by the rival schools. There are, however, some discrepancies and consequently doubts. But before physics became mathematized, there was no reason, not even a purely theoretical reason, to hold that a single awkward fact should be allowed to topple to the ground a comprehensive, serviceable, and solidly established theory. In biology, up to quite recent times, Alexander's views on the way in which scientific theories may be verified would not have seemed very outdated. The method he recommends is not so very different from that applied by Charles Darwin in his two main works.

Alexander's conception of what a comprehensive and adequate physical theory should be and should accomplish is shared by Maimonides. In his opinion, such a theory should set forth the causes of the physical phenomena and disclose their natural order. Not all explanations are scientifically acceptable. For a natural order means one that is in accord with the "nature of existence." In fact, Maimonides' notion of a satisfactory physical theory seems to imply – at least according to some passages of the *Guide*[27] – that only the efficient causes should be taken into account in a scientific explanation of the natural phenomena.[28] This should not, of course, lead to an extremist position. One ought not to lose sight altogether of the teleological considerations. For otherwise, to take but one example, the cardinal assumption that none of the animal and vegetable species that have ever existed have died out and that all of them will be preserved from this fate to all eternity, would become quite indefensible. In other words, it may be assumed that the world is so arranged that the indefinite continuance of its existence in its present state is ensured. But it is the efficient causes that take care of this. In accordance

27. Cf., for instance, II 19: "All that he (i.e., Aristotle) has explained to us regarding what is beneath the sphere of the moon follows an order conforming to that which exists, an order whose causes are clear. One can say of it that it derives of necessity from the motion and the powers of the sphere." In other words, Maimonides finds Aristotle's views on the physics of the sublunar world satisfactory because they provide a mechanical explanation of the phenomena.

28. The Aristotelian scientific explanation of the universe is, of course, based in the last analysis on the existence of the Prime Mover, who is not an efficient cause. Here I am abstracting from this aspect of the doctrine.

with the logic of the Aristotelian system, nobody (except Nature itself, a very unclear concept), can be regarded as responsible for these characteristics of the world order. For the universe (or Nature) is a primary datum, which means that its working can be understood and described, but that it is, generally speaking, senseless to look beyond the things themselves for the final causes of their existence, or of their existence in one particular way.[29]

Of course, this does not mean that natural science should deny purposive action on the part of living beings. But such an action is a part of the natural order and does not determine the latter.

It is not Maimonides' contention that the Aristotelians set up an incorrect or objectionable ideal of what scientific theory ought to be. The objections that he proffers are of another kind, being concerned with the failure of the science of his time to conform to this ideal. As he points out, science as he knew it gave a satisfactory explanation of the processes of the sublunar world, but was quite inadequate in dealing with celestial physics. He is, of course, quite right. His contemporary, Averroes, knew this as well as he did. The Aristotelian celestial physics was in a sad confusion because some of its principles could not be reconciled with two essential devices of the on the whole dominant Ptolemaic system, namely, the eccentrics and the epicycles. One of the points upon which this conflict hinged may be summarized as follows: Aristotelian physics required that the center around which a body accomplishes a circular revolution should be stationary, whereas these two devices posited centers that were in motion. The epicycles and eccentrics were invented in order to provide a mathematical explanation for the astronomical observations. It was thus a case of mathematics, a science that was held at that time to include astronomy, against the as yet almost unmathematized physics. This was felt to be very awkward both by the physicists and by the mathematicians (but more by the first, whose concern was with things as they really are, than by the second); it was a frustrating state of affairs.

These difficulties seem to have come to a head in Spain in the twelfth century, perhaps because of the rigorous Aristotelianism of the philosophers of that country. The discrepancies between astronomical and physical theory did not,

29. Maimonides mentions in III 13 that Aristotle has shown that the plants exist for the sake of animals. In reading this chapter one has the impression that, though in this particular passage Maimonides pays lip service to Aristotle's teleological tendencies, they go much too far for him. Indeed, the general sense of the chapter seems to suggest that within the domain of the investigations of the natural sciences teleological explanations may be serviceable and valid only in so far as they concern the relation between the various parts of a living organism and also the relation between any and all of these parts and the functioning of the organism to which they belong taken as a whole. The notion that one species of living being may exist for the sake of another species was emphatically not in line with the tendency of Maimonides' thought. On the other hand, he apparently did believe in the harmony of Nature taken as a whole.

however, in spite of their gravity, shake the philosophers' confidence in Aristotle's and Alexander's conception of scientific theory; and for this purpose as well as for others, Maimonides may be included among the philosophers. The possibility suggested in II 24 of the *Guide*, that human science, because of the insufficiency of the available data, will never be able to work out a valid physical theory applicable to the heavenly spheres, does not mean that the latter are not determined by the order, or, to use a later term, by the laws, of nature.

Quite apart from these general considerations, Alexander's treatise *On the Principles of the All* may have influenced Maimonides' views on the subject with which this treatise is not concerned, namely, religious and political history. It is true that the evidence for this assertion may seem rather slender, being purely terminological. In fact it hinges on the use by Maimonides of a single word; but it is a key word.

The following sentence occurs in the treatise *On the Principles of the All* (p. 265, ll. 16 ff.): "For the fabric of this universe and the natural *grace* dealt out by the Creator in[30] the natural agreement and accord of its parts and in their being fashioned in [due] relation to the universe [as a whole] are such[31] that if you should conceive the thought that one of these parts should be considered as abolished [it would mean] that none of them could remain as it is."

The Arabic word translated as "grace" reads *luṭf*. A very slight emendation would alter it into *talaṭṭuf*, a rarer word, which also makes sense, and perhaps even better sense. In that case the translation of the passage would read: "The wily graciousness," or "wily and gracious arrangements" used by the Creator, etc.[32] Now the noun *talaṭṭuf* and the corresponding verb *talaṭṭafa* occur altogether, in III 32, six times, in the different contexts; one of these calls to mind the text of Alexander that has just been quoted. There is a possibility that, in the copy of the treatise *On the Principles of the All* available to him, Maimonides may have read *talaṭṭuf* instead of *luṭf*. But this is a secondary point; the probability that this chapter of the *Guide* was influenced by the treatise is very strong even without this assumption. As a matter of fact, Maimonides also uses the word *luṭf* in this chapter (see below).

30. P. 265, l. 16: I read *fī mā* (instead of *fīh mā*).
31. Literally: are in such a state of order and accord.
32. "Wily graciousness" or "gracious ruse" being the terms used in the present translation of the *Guide* to render *talaṭṭuf*. My choice of the expression has been influenced by the fact that, in his Hebrew translation of the *Guide* Samuel Ibn Tibbon, who may have been influenced by the fact suggested in III 32 that some persons (not Maimonides himself) might impute to God the use of a strategem (*ḥīla*), renders *talaṭṭuf* by *ʿorma* ("cunning," "ruse"). Both this Hebrew word and the allusion to the notion of God's recurring to strategems call to mind Hegel's expression: "the ruse of reason" – "List der Vernunft."

The relevant passages of III 32 read:

1. If you consider the divine actions—I mean to say the natural actions—the deity's wily graciousness [*talaṭṭuf*] and wisdom, as shown in the creation of living beings, in the gradation of the motions of the limbs, and the proximity of some of the latter to others, will through them become clear to you. Similarly His wisdom and wily graciousness [*talaṭṭuf*], as shown in the gradual succession of the various states of the whole individual, will become clear to you. The brain is an example of the gradation of the motions and the proximity of the limbs of an individual: for its front part is soft, very soft indeed, whereas its posterior part is more solid. . . . Similarly the deity made a wily and gracious arrangement [*talaṭṭafa*] with regard to all the individuals of the living beings that suck. For when born, such individuals are extremely soft and cannot feed on dry food. Accordingly breasts were prepared for them. . . .

2. Many things in our Law are due to something similar to this very governance on the part of Him who governs, may He be glorified and exalted. For a sudden transition from one opposite to another is impossible. And therefore man, according to his nature, is not capable of abandoning suddenly all to which he was accustomed. As therefore God sent *Moses our Master* to make out of us *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*—through the knowledge of Him, may He be exalted. . .; and as at that time the way of life generally accepted and customary in the whole world and the universal service upon which we were brought up consisted in offering various species of living beings in the temples in which images were set up, in worshipping the latter, and in burning incense before them. . . His wisdom, may He be exalted, and His gracious ruse [*talaṭṭuf*], which is manifest in regard to all His creatures, did not require that He give us a Law prescribing the rejection, abandonment, and abolition of all these kinds of worship. . . . Therefore He, may He be exalted, suffered the above-mentioned kinds of worship to remain, but transferred them from created or imaginary and unreal things to His own name, may He be exalted, ordering us to practice them with regard to Him, may He be exalted. Thus He commanded us to build a temple for Him . . .; to bow down in worship before Him; and to burn incense before Him. And He forbade the performance of any of these actions with a view to someone else. . . . And because of their employment in the temple and the sacrifices in it, it was necessary to fix for them dues that would be sufficient for them; namely, the dues of the *Levites* and the *Priests*. Through this divine ruse [*talaṭṭuf*] it came about that the memory of *idolatry* was effaced and that the grandest and true foundation of our belief—namely, the existence and oneness of the deity—was firmly established, while at the same time the souls had no feeling of repugnance and were not repelled because of the abolition of modes of worship to which they were accustomed and than which no other mode of worship was known at that time.

I know that on thinking about this at first your soul will necessarily have a feeling of repugnance toward this notion and will feel aggrieved because of it; and you will ask me in your heart and say to me: How is it possible that none of the commandments, prohibitions, and great actions—which are very precisely set forth and prescribed for fixed seasons—should not be intended for its own sake, but for the sake of something else, as if this were a ruse invented for our benefit by God in order to achieve His first intention? . . . Hear then the reply to your question that will put an end to this sickness in your heart and reveal to you the true reality of that to which I have drawn your attention. It is to the effect that the text of the *Torah* tells a quite similar story, namely, in its dictum: *God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although it was near, and so on. But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness of the Red*

Sea. Just as God perplexed them in anticipation of what their bodies were naturally incapable of bearing—turning them away from the high road toward which they had been going, toward another road so that the first intention should be achieved—so did He in anticipation of what the soul is naturally incapable of receiving, prescribe laws that we have mentioned so that the first intention should be achieved, namely, the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and the rejection of *idolatry*. For just as it is not in the nature of man that, after having been brought up in slavish service occupied with clay, bricks, and similar things, he should all of a sudden wash off from his hands the dirt deriving from them and proceed immediately to fight against *the children of Anak*, so is it also not in his nature that, after having been brought up upon very many modes of worship and of customary practices, which the souls find so agreeable that they become as it were a primary notion, he should abandon them all of a sudden. And just as the deity used a gracious ruse [*talaṭṭafa*] in causing them to wander perplexedly in the desert until their souls became courageous—it being well known that life in the desert and lack of comforts for the body necessarily develop courage whereas the opposite circumstances necessarily develop cowardice—and until, moreover, people were born who were not accustomed to humiliation and servitude—all this having been brought about by *Moses our Master* by means of divine commandments. . .—so did this group of laws derive from a divine grace [*luṭf*], so that they should be left with the kind of practices to which they were accustomed and so that consequently the belief, which constitutes the first intention, should be validated in them.

These texts establish, first and foremost, the existence (within the limits defined above) of a teleological element in nature, a conception that, as the frequent use of the term *talaṭṭuf* suggests, is probably greatly indebted to Alexander's treatise *On the Principles of the All;* though Maimonides, in contradiction to this treatise, draws his examples from the living organisms (helped therein by Galen, whose book *On the Utility of the Parts of the Body* he quotes in this context). In the second place these texts show that this teleological conception of Alexander should not be restricted to natural phenomena. It ought to be extended to the domain of political and religious history, as it helps to explain the making of Israel and to account for major characteristics of the Torah. Just as Nature, or God working in Nature, makes shift with the available corporeal devices in order to form a viable organism, History, or God working in History, makes shift with available devices of a different kind in order to form a viable nation. In this latter case these devices included a forty years' sojourn in the desert intended to train the people in the military virtues.

The Mosaic commandments or some of them were likewise such devices. Not all of them are the best possible commandments in an absolute sense; some are the best that are possible in a particular historical situation; for the necessary break with the past would have been impracticable if, within limits, some form of continuity had not been preserved. Both in the domain of Nature and in that of History the devices to which Maimonides refers are attributed by him to God. But, as he states elsewhere (II 48), God works through intermediate causes.

Before we go on to the Islamic authors, Maimonides' attitude toward Greek philosophers not belonging (or not wholly belonging) to the Peripatetic tradition will be referred to. Some of these philosophers are not mentioned in the letter to Ibn Tibbon.

Plato

First Plato. There is no doubt that in Maimonides' opinion, Plato, considered as a physicist and a metaphysician, rated much lower than Aristotle. The Arabic and Jewish so-called Aristotelian philosophers were concerned with sober truth demonstrable by the concordance of theory with the facts of the external world. In consequence, they tended to appreciate in scientific doctrines the discovery, through recourse to the sense data, of a permanent natural order. Aristotelian physics satisfied this exigency, whereas Plato's devalorization of the truth content of the sense data and his tendency to regard the current physical theories, his own included, as myths, did not. In the opinion of these medieval thinkers, the mythical mode of expression constituted, when used by a philosopher, a deliberate concealment of theoretical truth. Sometimes it was dictated by expediency. But a philosopher writing for philosophers had no need of these trappings. In his letter to Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides makes it very clear that, in view of the fact that Plato's works are full of parables, the serious student need not trouble to read them. As, however, Maimonides was fully aware that the reading public did not only consist of serious, fully qualified students, this remark does not, as we shall see below, give a complete idea of his evaluation of parables as a mode of exposition.

In the few passages of the *Guide* in which Plato is explicitly mentioned, the reference is to the *Timaeus* or to some paraphrase or doxographical summary of that dialogue, and in one passage (II 13) also a citation from the latter occurring in Aristotle's *Physics*. Only one of the Platonic physical or metaphysical doctrines is discussed in the *Guide* at some length, namely, the doctrine attributed to Plato according to which the world was created in time out of pre-existent matter (II 13 and 25–26). According to the second of these passages, the doctrine does not contradict religion. Maimonides, however, makes it clear that the doctrine does not interest him in the least. The intellectual choice with which he confronts his readers is that between an eternal and permanent world order with the workings of which divine intervention could never have interfered; and the absolutely free action of God's Will, which created the world out of nothing and can and does alter the natural order as it pleases. The Platonic doctrine was apt to confuse this clear-cut issue.

II 6 refers to a Platonic doctrine according to which God looks at the world of the intellects and thus causes the universe to emanate therefrom. This is in all

probability a reference to some perhaps (though not necessarily) Neo-Platonic interpretation of the doctrine of the *Timaeus* (28A ff.) concerning the eternal model imitated by the Demiurge.

I 17 refers to Matter having been called a female by Plato and the philosophers who preceded him. With respect to Plato this is not quite accurate, as the Receptacle – a term that was sometimes interpreted as signifying Matter – is designated in the *Timaeus* (51A) as Mother. However, Maimonides may have followed some later Platonistic interpretation. This example is given by Maimonides to show that Plato, as well as the adherent of religious Law, uses veiled language.

Now the *Guide* itself is an example of the philosophic use of veiled language; and the need, the political necessity, to employ it constitutes one of the main themes of this work. It is a theme, moreover, that is bound up with others as, or even more, important: for instance, prophecy, the position and the function of the philosopher in human society, political doctrine in general. As Leo Strauss has shown,[33] Maimonides' views on these matters were in the last analysis determined by Plato's position, the principal direct impact being that of al-Fārābī and other Moslem philosophers who adapted Plato's doctrines to their own requirements.

No attempt can be made in the present Introduction to delimit and define the influence exercised by Plato on the *Guide* in this field, as it is too generalized, too diffuse, and often too indirect. It will, however, be referred to in the section dealing with al-Fārābī.

The Pythagoreans

The only reference to the Pythagoreans occurring in the *Guide* (II 8) refers to their doctrine of the harmony of the spheres, rejected by Aristotle and, in consequence, also by Maimonides.

Epicurus

Epicurus' denial of providence was, as has been stated above, known to Maimonides from Alexander's treatise *On Providence* (see *Guide* III 17; cf. II 13). It might have been, but was not, recognized by him as presenting a serious challenge to Aristotelianism as well as to the orthodox religious attitude. Its weakness was that it was liable to be regarded as unscientific, science being based on the permanent existence of the cosmos. As far as the events of terrestrial life, at least those involving only individuals and not whole species, were concerned,

33. See *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Berlin, 1935); "Quelques remarques sur la science politique de Maïmonide et de Fārābī," *Revue des Études juives*, C (1936), 1–37; and in other studies.

the Aristotelians including Maimonides generally believed as much as the Epicureans in the working-out of the efficient causes (i.e., of blind chance or of necessity, two terms that in this context are equivalent). The fact that man's reason might help him to elude the dangers with which external necessity threatened him or to adopt an attitude that would alleviate or nullify the latter's impact was recognized, though with differences of formulation, by the Epicureans as well as by Maimonides and other Aristotelians.

In I 73, Maimonides contrasts on a point of detail the atomism of the Mutakallimūn with that of Epicurus, about which he must have had rather accurate information.

In I 73, the *Guide* refers to Euclid and to Apollonius of Perga's *Conic Sections*.

Galen

Whereas Ptolemy, who is mentioned several times in the *Guide*, is quite rightly exclusively referred to as an astronomer, Galen is known to Maimonides not only as a physician but also as a philosopher. In the last chapter of his main medical work, entitled *The Medical Aphorisms of Moses* (in Arabic, *Fuṣūl Mūsā fi'l-ṭibb*; in Hebrew, *Pirqe Moshe*), Maimonides polemizes at length not only against some medical views of Galen but also against certain opinions of the latter on philosophic problems and on religion. As a matter of fact, the Greek physician had considerable influence, which might be designated as subversive, on the development of philosophic thought in the Arabic civilization. Much of the opposition to, or the sceptical attitude toward, Aristotle, was inspired by him. He did not accept Aristotle's theory of place and (a point that is perhaps more important in the context of the medieval debates) had doubts concerning the nature of time; the latter point is mentioned in the *Guide* (II 13; cf. I 73). He also took an agnostic attitude toward the problem of the immortality of the soul and that of the eternity of the world. The *Guide* does not refer to Galen's views with regard to the first point (which is understandable as this work does not contain an explicit discussion of the immortality of the soul), but it mentions (I 15) the disparaging remark to which al-Fārābī was provoked by Galen's view that the eternity of the world cannot be demonstrated. It is an interesting point that Maimonides does not attempt to defend Galen, although the latter's position was similar to the one ostensibly maintained in the *Guide*; and this despite the fact that, from the philosophic point of view, Galen could be regarded, in contradistinction to the Mutakallimūn, as a respectable ally.

III 12 quotes with approval a remark of Galen on the ineluctable limitations imposed on human beings by the fact that the material ingredients that are

commingled at the moment of conception are of so inferior a kind. III 32 quotes from Galen an example illustrating the teleological element in the structure of living organisms. I 73 refers to Galen's remarks concerning the thinkers who believed that the senses deceive us.

Proclus

The *Guide* does not explicitly mention the sixth-century Neo-Platonist Proclus, who, in a work translated into Arabic, had made out a cogent case for the eternity of the world. It may be argued that the proofs for this thesis ascribed, in II 14 and 25, to philosophers later than Aristotle may derive from this treatise. But the resemblance between Proclus' proofs and those set forth by Maimonides does not extend to details. On the whole it seems more probable that Maimonides took over these proofs from some Moslem philosopher (it may have been al-Fārābī), who had reformulated Proclus' arguments while making use of them.

John Philoponus is mentioned in the *Guide* with reference to the origins of kalām and will be discussed in the present Introduction in that context.

Al-Fārābī

After Aristotle, al-Fārābī is the philosopher whom, judging by the letter to Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides held in the highest esteem. In fact, the term that he applies to him may lend color to the suspicion that, as far as theoretical and political sciences were concerned, he was ready to follow al-Fārābī's lead in all points.

Be that as it may, it is clear that Maimonides was persuaded that the approach and the methods and style of exposition and formulation adopted by al-Fārābī in all matters impinging upon, or connected with, the sphere of organized religion constituted the most notable and authoritative of the responses made by philosophers to the challenge, the danger, and perhaps the opportunity presented by allegiance to a monotheistic religion. In other words, he felt that al-Fārābī had shown what attitude a philosopher ought to take in these latter times when, as Maimonides points out (I 31) a new cause of difference of opinion (and consequently of error) had been added to those enumerated by Alexander of Aphrodisias: namely, adherence to customary beliefs and to the notions inculcated by a tradition-ridden education.

The philosophic position with respect to the problem of the eternity of the world, the attitude that should be taken with regard to the apologetics of the Mutakallimūn, and, perhaps most important of all, the theory of prophecy as part

of a political philosophy and of an anthropology going back in many essentials to Plato, were all set forth by al-Fārābī in a style and a mode of exposition that possibly influenced Maimonides as much as the doctrines themselves.

Al-Fārābī was not afraid of contradicting himself; perhaps he did it on purpose. At least, it is certain and was already pointed out by Arabic philosophers such as Ibn Ṭufayl that the doctrines of some of his treatises on such matters as the immortality of the soul are in radical opposition to opinions maintained by him in other treatises. This may of course be due to a change in his views. It is, however, more probable that the main reason for these apparent vacillations was that not all of these treatises were addressed to readers of the same kind.

This argues a certain degree of prudence. And yet in al-Fārābī's works, one often comes across outrageously unorthodox and startlingly plain-spoken statements, which presumably could be read by anyone who cared to do so. Al-Fārābī evidently believed that the very abstract and very precise style that he favored had the virtue of discouraging the curiosity of the uneducated and the semi-educated; he relied upon it to ward off danger from himself and from the community, which might be jeopardized by the indiscriminate dissemination of knowledge among people incapable of understanding what it all meant. On the whole, this belief seems to have been justified. This lesson of style was certainly not lost upon Maimonides. One observes accordingly that disconcertingly unorthodox statements, perhaps rendered innocuous by their abstract formulation, occur also in the *Guide* (for instance in I 68) though, probably, less often than in al-Fārābī's treatises. But then the *Guide* belongs to a very peculiar literary genre, of which it is the unique specimen. Its scope, its composition, and its purpose are quite different from those of any of al-Fārābī's works.

Four of al-Fārābī's treatises are explicitly mentioned in the *Guide*: (1) his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics;* (2) his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics;* (3) his treatise *On the Variable Substances;* (4) his treatise *On the Intellect.* Of these the first three have not been found and are perhaps totally lost.

The reference to the commentary on the *Physics* (II 19) presents no great interest outside the context of celestial physics with which it is concerned.

In contrast, the quotation from the commentary on the *Ethics* is of considerable significance; for it has a direct bearing on one of the main themes of the *Guide*, the theory of providence. This quotation reads as follows (III 18): "Those who have the capacity of making their soul pass from one moral quality to another are those of whom Plato has said that God's providence watches over them to a higher degree."

It seems clear that al-Fārābī maintained that the fact that human individuals progressed toward, or attained, perfection can be equated with providence watching

over them.[34] This was Maimonides' own opinion, as he himself points in this context. In all probability, he took it over, with or without modifications, from al-Fārābī.

Al-Fārābī's commentary on the *Ethics* owes its wide notoriety to other passages. As Maimonides certainly knew, many of the most famous Spanish philosophers of the twelfth century were provoked into criticizing or explaining away certain uncompromising opinions expressed in this work. According to Ibn Ṭufayl,[35] al-Fārābī sets forth in this commentary the view that happiness exists in this life and this world and, after this assertion, makes a statement according to which "everything else that is spoken of is [nothing but] drivel and old wives' tales."

Ibn Bājja, for his part, in an as yet unpublished text[36] defends al-Fārābī against the charge that in this commentary he professed the opinion that there is no afterlife, that there is no happiness but political (*madanī*) happiness, that the only existence is that known to the senses, and that all assertions concerning a different kind of existence are old wives' tales.[37]

Averroes in his Great Commentary on *De anima* is concerned with a different, though related, complex of ideas expounded in this work of al-Fārābī.[38] These ideas, which Averroes regards as wholly unacceptable, are based upon the contention of Alexander of Aphrodisias that the hylic, i.e., the potential, intellect is a faculty subject to generation and corruption that subsists in the human individual. Al-Fārābī infers from this premise that this intellect is unable to cognize abstract forms, i.e., forms separate from matter. For an Aristotelian principle lays down that the intellect becomes identical with that which it cognizes, and such identity is inconceivable in the case of these forms and the lowly kind of intellect that is postulated by al-Fārābī. Hence, according to al-Fārābī, man cannot be united with the separate intellect or, to be more precise, with the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect functions with regard to man solely as an efficient cause and by no means as a form with which man can be invested.[39] Man's end is merely speculative perfection.[40] The last statement apparently means that man can have discursive science, but not that intuitive knowledge which, according to Greek and Arabic philosophers, is the highest form of knowledge.

34. Al-Fārābī apparently refers to moral perfection only, but he certainly had also (or rather first and foremost) in mind the perfection of the intellect.
35. Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, ed. L. Gauthier (Beirut, 1936), p. 14.
36. See MS. Bodleian Library, Pococke 206, fol. 126b.
37. Cf. Plato *Gorgias* 527A5.
38. See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis "De anima libros,"* ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 481.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 485 and 502.
40. *Perfectio speculativa.* These two words are presumably a translation of the Arabic: *kamāl naẓarī.* Cf. al-Fārābī, *Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*, ed. M. Mahdi (Beirut, 1961), p. 131, l. 6.

This definition of man's end may seem to be a non sequitur. For it may be argued that it is a plausible conclusion from al-Fārābī's premises that the highest perfection possible to man is to be found in a life of practical action (Aristotle's *bios praktikos*) rather than in a life of thought (*bios theōrētikos*). As the passage of Ibn Bājja referred to above shows, this was a view that rightly or wrongly was attributed to al-Fārābī, and certain passages in the latter's extant works suggest that this interpretation of his doctrine may not have been wholly baseless. However, Averroes' testimony seems to be opposed to it, and it is very unlikely that the relevant sentence is corrupt or mistranslated. Moreover, it seems implausible that in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* al-Fārābī should have categorically maintained the superiority of the practical life over the theoretical, an opinion that is wholly at variance with the system of values propounded in the work he is interpreting. He may, however, have steered a middle course.

It can be argued that these views of al-Fārābī, set forth in a work known to Maimonides, may legitimately be taken into account in an interpretation of the latter's philosophy. If this view is accepted, one should bear in mind (1) the high praise that Maimonides bestows on al-Fārābī, and (2) the fact that there is a certain likelihood that the doctrine of the *Guide* concerning Moses can be correctly interpreted as signifying that this prophet had attained the union with the Active Intellect that al-Fārābī, in one authoritative work, supposes to be impossible (see also below). In this connection it may be added that in all probability Maimonides adopted Alexander's and al-Fārābī's conception of the hylic intellect.

However, the matter also has another aspect. Not all the philosophers who accepted Alexander's views on the hylic intellect agreed with regard to the union with the Active Intellect. Averroes did not accept these views, but Ibn Bājja, the founder of the Aristotelian school of Moslem Spain, was by and large in accord with them, and yet, as we shall see, he strongly attacked al-Fārābī for his refusal to admit the possibility of man's conjunction with the Active Intellect. As the letter to Ibn Tibbon shows, Maimonides regarded Ibn Bājja as a genuine philosopher.

As a matter of fact not only Ibn Bājja contradicted al-Fārābī on this point. Al-Fārābī, who was famous for his inconsistencies, contradicted himself. In his treatise *On the Intellect*, which is repeatedly referred to in the *Guide*, he describes[41] the highest perfection that man can attain, the state in which he is supremely happy. In that state, which is the state of being endowed with the so-called acquired intellect, man is exceedingly close to the Active Intellect, and, at the same time, his activity is not transitive, it does not go beyond his own self. In fact, man, his act, and the fact that he is accomplishing an act are one and the same thing. In less recondite terminology this means that man has become an intellect

41. *Risāla fi'l-ʿaql*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1938), pp. 31 f.

and that consequently (this being an essential quality of all intellects) he as subject is identical both with the act of intellection and with its object. In this state he can cognize without the help of the bodily organs.

Thus while al-Fārābī's commentary on the *Ethics* rules out the possibility of a human being attaining the state of supreme perfection that may have been attributed by Maimonides to Moses, one finds in al-Fārābī's treatise *On the Intellect* (and also in his treatise on *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, p. 58) a description of such a state. It should be remarked, however, that the author does not appear firmly to assert that this state can actually be achieved. The whole train of thought is put forward in a very tentative way (see p. 30, l. 8). Al-Fārābī does not suggest either explicitly or implicitly that he professed these views on the highest perfection of man. In fact the text of the treatise does not authorize a valid answer to the question. Nor does he affirm that Aristotle held that man's conjunction with the Active Intellect was attainable, though one may gather that this may be a possible, perhaps even probable, interpretation of the views of the Greek philosopher.[42] Al-Fārābī's various points of view as well as Ibn Bājja's position, which will be discussed below, have to be kept in mind in any attempt to assay Maimonides' views on the intellectual supremacy of Moses.

There is one explicit reference in the *Guide* (II 18 in the beginning) to al-Fārābī's treatise *On the Intellect*. The passage, which is quoted[43] (and which may be found in Bouyges' edition, p. 30, ll. 9–10) is concerned with the intermittence of the activity of the Active Intellect.

The somewhat later passage in the same chapter in which Maimonides expounds the opinion that this intermittence is due not to a quality inherent in the essence of the Active Intellect, but to the varying dispositions of the material substances that have to receive the forms emanating from the Active Intellect, and that in some cases are incapable of doing so, allude to a passage of the treatise *On the Intellect* (not mentioned by Maimonides in this connection). This passage occurs in the treatise in the same context (p. 33) as the one referred to first. There are some grounds for thinking that it was al-Fārābī's version of the doctrine, according to which forms emanating from the Active Intellect are received not only by the human mind but also by matter and the physical bodies, that was

42. It is an interesting fact that, although Averroes in his Great Commentary on *De anima* quotes several times al-Fārābī's treatise *On the Intellect* and even refers (p. 493) to the doctrine of the acquired intellect (*intellectus adeptus*) expounded in this treatise, he does not allude to the contradiction between this doctrine and al-Fārābī's views as stated in his commentary on the *Ethics*. As we have seen, Averroes repeatedly refers in the Commentary in question to these views.

43. The quotation is not quite accurate. Perhaps in making it, Maimonides relied on his memory.

taken over by Maimonides. This doctrine is of central importance in Maimonides' physics and psychology.

The philosophic thinking of Maimonides (as well as that of Averroes) is to a considerable extent determined by the necessity to face the challenge offered by Moslem and Jewish theologians known under the name of Mutakallimūn. In these polemics al-Fārābī was of great service because some of his works propounded definitions and descriptions of the purpose, attitude, and methods of the Mutakallimūn that seemed to show that these opponents need not be taken too seriously by people interested in theoretical truth.

One of these definitions referred to in the *Guide* (I 73) as having been coined by al-Fārābī occurs in two passages of the treatise *On the Intellect* (pp. 7–8 and 11–12). The first of these reads:

"As for the intellect that the Mutakallimūn are always talking about, when they say about a thing, 'This is necessitated, or denied, or accepted, or not accepted by the intellect,' they mean thereby something that is universally accepted by the first [reflections] of the opinion of everybody. For they designate as intellect the first [reflections] of common opinion [professed] by everybody or by most people. This will become clear to you if you examine with regard to the use of this term, point by point, either their oral argumentation or their writings."

The second passage reads: "The Mutakallimūn believe that the intellect that they talk about among themselves is the intellect that is mentioned by Aristotle in the *Book of Demonstration*,[44] and they point this out. If, however, you examine the premises they make use of, you will find that all of these without exception derive from the first [reflections] of common opinion. Acordingly they point out one thing and make use of another."

As al-Fārābī points out in the same treatise (pp. 8–9), the intellect with which Aristotle is concerned in the *Book of Demonstration* is the psychic faculty that enables man to obtain certain knowledge of true general and necessary premises not by means of thought and reasoning but either because of his inborn disposition (i.e., a priori knowledge), or from his youth onwards, or without being aware in what way he acquired this knowledge. These premises constitute the principles of the speculative sciences. Al-Fārābī thus makes it clear that when the Mutakallimūn claim that their doctrines are based on intellectual reasoning, they are from the philosophic point of view equivocating; the fact being that their premises are constituted by generally held opinions and not by first principles grounded on a priori intellectual certainty. What they call intellect (or reason) means simply immediate acceptance of such opinions. No true science can be developed on such flimsy foundations.

44. I.e., *The Posterior Analytics.*

In this demonstration of the unscientific position of the Mutakallimūn, al-Fārābī probably had in mind the Muʿtazilites who, self-proclaimed rationalists that they were, set great store by their use of the intellect. In al-Fārābī's time they wielded great influence. The situation had, however, radically shifted in the nearly three centuries between al-Fārābī and Maimonides. The Muʿtazilites were no longer an intellectual power to be reckoned with. But philosophy was challenged by another nonrationalist kalām school, the Ashʿarites, who in various parts of the Islamic world set about working out an official theology, building universities for their own brand of doctrine, and in some places coercing those who disagreed. Moreover they had had, a generation or two before Maimonides' time, a redoubtable champion: al-Ghazālī.

In spite of the decline of the Muʿtazilites and the ascendancy of the Ashʿarites, Maimonides indubitably accepted in all essentials al-Fārābī's analysis of the intellectual inadequacy of kalām. His attitude on this point is not as anachronistic as it might seem; in spite of radical differences between the two schools, many fundamental Ashʿarite doctrines and notably their physical theories (if the term may be used in this context) were taken over with various changes from the Muʿtazilites. As far as these theories are concerned, Maimonides' quarrel with the Mutakallimūn is essentially caused by their denial of a permanent natural order, i.e., of a rational self-perpetuating cosmos explicable by science. As their tenth premise (*Guide* I 73) makes it clear, anything that is imaginable is in their opinion admissible by the intellect and can happen; e.g., the earth can turn into a revolving sphere. This implies that the apparent cosmic order is a haphazard or arbitrary arrangement. It is in the course of his discussion of this negation of the possibility of physical science conceived on Aristotelian lines that Maimonides, quite appropriately, cites al-Fārābī's opinion that the intellect of the Mutakallimūn was sometimes nothing but the first reflections of the common opinion, and sometimes, as the *Guide* adds (I 73), mere imagination. Thus Maimonides believes, as apparently did al-Fārābī, that because of their faulty epistemology and their incapacity to grasp what the philosophic intellect is and does, they cannot have access to science.

In his view of the Mutakallimūn, Maimonides was influenced not only by al-Fārābī's judgment on the conception of reason or intellect current among these theologians, but also by the earlier philosophers' definition of the purpose they had in mind in their theorizing. Both Maimonides and al-Fārābī consider that the Mutakullimūn are not engaged in a quest for the truth, but in a defense of religious belief and dogma, i.e., in apologetics. Al-Fārābī gives a very impressive description of their tactics in a treatise on the *Classification of the Sciences* (*Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulūm*), but there is no evidence to show that Maimonides used this treatise in the *Guide*.

On the other hand, a lost treatise of al-Fārābī entitled *The Changing Beings* (*al-Mawjūdāt al-mutaghayyira*), which is explicitly referred to in the *Guide* (I 74 in fine) appears to have been one of the main non-kalām sources from which Maimonides' knowledge and interpretation of the doctrines of the Mutakallimūn derive. This work seems to have been particularly well known in Moslem Spain, for Ibn Bājja[45] and Averroes[46] also quote it. Whereas Maimonides speaks of al-Fārābī's refuting in this work a kalām proof of the temporal creation of the world, the two other Spanish philosophers mention the attacks he directs therein against the Christian sixth-century Greek philosopher John Philoponus. It seems probable that al-Fārābī did not differentiate too sharply between the doctrine of John Philoponus, who believed in the temporal creation of the world,[47] and that of the Mutakallimūn, who held the same belief. Furthermore, the fact that in the treatise with which we are at present concerned al-Fārābī seems to have polemized, on account of this belief, both against the former and against the latter suggests that this treatise may have been the source of the brief sketch of the beginnings and development of kalām occurring in the *Guide* (I 71). In Maimonides' opinion as given there, the first origins of this school of thought may be found in the teachings of the pre-Islamic Christian theologians, both Syrians and Greeks, who endeavored to counter such opinions of the philosophers as were incompatible with religion. Al-Fārābī's treatise may well have contained the assertion put forward by Maimonides that the first Moslem Mutakallimūn took over the doctrine of John Philoponus.[48]

It seems certain that the main purpose of the work on *The Changing Beings* was to defend the doctrine of the eternity of the world. Evidence in favor of this view may be found not only in Maimonides' explicit reference to this work, but also, as has been partly indicated,[49] in the quotations from it found in Ibn Bājja's and in Averroes' commentaries. In view of these facts it may be regarded as more

45. See his Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, MS. Bodleian, Pococke 206, fol. 56a. On this Commentary, see below. Like Maimonides, Ibn Bājja refers to al-Fārābī's polemics against John Philoponus in the treatise in question.
46. See his Great Commentary on the *Physics* (Venice, 1530), Apud Iuntas, 154a, col. b. We learn from Averroes that al-Fārābī examined in this treatise the various kinds of changes (or transformations; *transmutatio*) that may be imagined to precede every change. Evidently this piece of information and others that go with it do not give an adequate idea of al-Fārābī's argumentation, but they do corroborate the evidence from other sources that al-Fārābī's main theme in the work in question was the eternity of the world.
47. And wrote a lengthy work to refute Proclus, who believed in the eternity of the world. John Philoponus' *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* was known to the Arabs, though they may not have possessed the complete text of the work.
48. And, according to Maimonides, also of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī. This is a chronological blunder; see below.
49. See n. 46.

than probable that when Maimonides refers (II 15) to al-Fārābī's being convinced that the eternity of the world can be demonstrated and that Aristotle could have no doubts about it, and, in the same context, to al-Fārābī's disparagement of Galen because the latter took an agnostic position in this matter, he had in mind this treatise of the Arabic philosopher.

None of the political writings of al-Fārābī (a loose term, but one that may be conveniently applied to *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, *The Political Regimes*, and other treatises) are explicitly cited in the *Guide*. It is quite evident, however, that they had a very strong influence on Maimonides. In fact, the latter's views on the nature and function of prophecy and on the two-fold purpose of the good city stem from al-Fārābī's conceptions. However, the divergencies between the political doctrines of the two are also very significant. They point to influences posterior to al-Fārābī by which Maimonides was affected[50] and also to a different conception of the perils inherent in the study and the propagation of philosophic knowledge. Al-Fārābī was, doubtless, less conscious than Maimonides of the danger that these pursuits represented for society at large. Accordingly none of his writings is as carefully designed as is the *Guide* to throw the unqualified readers and many qualified ones off the right track.

Charting these similarities and these differences would involve a detailed exposition of the whole of Maimonides' practical philosophy. In most cases, however, such an exact and extensive comparison would not result in the discovery of more or less certain, or at least very probable, sources of Maimonides (which is the philological task with which the present Introduction is mainly concerned). On the other hand, in view of the fact that the whole of Maimonides' political philosophy is set within the scheme of reference established by al-Fārābī, certain salient points exemplifying the latter philosopher's influence and its limits must be mentioned. Otherwise the over-all picture would become hopelessly lopsided.

Moreover, in order to get the right perspective one should go beyond al-Fārābī back to Plato, at least in order to give some slight indication of the specific category of the political themes with which Maimonides is concerned. For al-Fārābī's position and criteria are, as far as political philosophy is concerned, largely Platonic. Maimonides, who in this field was decisively influenced by al-Fārābī, was thus a Platonist at a second remove, but perhaps not aware, or not fully aware, of this fact.

The following point should also be noted: Whereas it is practically certain that

50. To take a case in point, al-Fārābī's opinion that philosophers are qua philosophers called upon, circumstances permitting, to play a central role in politics has no explicit counterpart in Maimonides' theory as expounded in the *Guide*, an omission that is certainly not due to chance. This conception may, however, have partly determined his practical activities and is hinted at in this work.

Maimonides had no access to Aristotle's work on politics and may not even have been aware of the book's existence, no such certainty exists with regard to al-Fārābī; it is possible that this work of Aristotle or at least excerpts from, or a paraphrase of, it may have been available to him. If this were so, it would mean that his adoption of Plato's political philosophy rather than Aristotle's was not solely determined by historical accident. Free choice on his part may not have been altogether absent in this matter, which was of crucial importance for the whole course of medieval Arabic and Jewish philosophy.

Some relevant points on which the Platonic and Aristotelian positions differ may be mentioned at this stage.

Aristotle takes the existence of human society for granted, much as he does the existence and the order of the cosmos. It is a primary datum accounted for by man's being a political animal, as are other animal species, i.e., by man's social instinct.[51] It is clear that this explanation is designed to bring home the superfluity of further inquiry rather than to indicate an efficient cause of human society that would, even if only ideally, be prior to it (a method that is employed, to cite but one instance, in the social theories that take as their starting point the isolated human being). Nor does Aristotle's political doctrine posit for the city an end that transcends society and man as a political animal. When Aristotle says that "while [the polis] came into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of the good life" (*Politics* 1252b30; Rackham), he doubtless has in mind a good political life in a flourishing and civilized city, but not the highest way of life – this being the theoretical life,[52] i.e., that of the philosopher. The perfect philosopher, who has outgrown, as in Aristotle's view he can and should do, the need for intellectual companionship, belongs to the city only in so far as he has to provide for his physical

51. Cf. Aristotle *Politics* 1252b31–1253a29. 1253a30 reads: "He who first united people in such a partnership was the greatest of benefactors." Taken by itself this statement might be interpreted to mean that the human communities and cities are not natural products whose existence is determined by fundamental characteristics of the species but rather institutions that have to be invented by some outstanding individual. But such an interpretation is contradicted by the passage that precedes this statement.

52. In other words, the intellectual virtues are not the natural end of the ethical virtues, though practicing the latter may be an indispensable preparation for the acquisition of the former. This implies that the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or at least the portion in it that treats of the theoretical life and its superiority over the life of action, is not the natural conclusion of the preceding books: a break intervenes.

A different interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is, of course, possible and has often been put forward. It is a moot question. However, for our present purposes it is relevant to note that the relation between the ethical and the intellectual virtues that has been indicated above seems to be the one accepted by the medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophers. It is, for instance, implied in Maimonides' attitude toward ordinary morality and in his evaluation of the practical intellect as compared with the theoretical (see *Guide* I 2). The Platonistic political doctrine of the philosophers in question did not on these points interfere with their Aristotelianism.

necessities. Qua philosopher, he is self-sufficient. In fact, allowing for differences of vocabulary, Aristotle seems to have anticipated Epicurus' discovery that the life of the philosopher was a private life, with which civic activities had no intrinsic connection either in fact or in theory.

Plato's position is different. He does not regard the existence of the cities or of human societies in general as a primary datum or as the direct product of the social instincts and propensities of mankind. The starting point of his political doctrine as set forth in the *Republic* is from a certain point of view prior to the city (just as the starting point of the natural science of the *Timaeus* is prior to the cosmos). It is individual man and his material needs, the realm of Ananke. For it is economic necessity (*chreia*) that impels the human individual to form the embryo of a city (see *Republic* 369B5 ff.). On the other hand, beyond all existent cities, there is the ideal polis ruled by philosophers. Though the latter is a conception that may and probably will never be realized, its very notion implies that no actually existent regime can be regarded as an end in itself. On the part of the philosopher, the acceptance of this conception entails in a way a double allegiance; the point being that, contrary to Aristotle, philosophy even in its highest reaches cannot be held to be a purely private occupation. Man qua metaphysical animal is obligatorily tied up with man the political animal.

But this connection cannot be easily defined or circumscribed; for it has different aspects. The Platonic philosopher is called upon to be the ruler of the ideal city. But he also constitutes an apparent or real danger for the real city and is himself in danger in it.[53] It is an equivocal position. For evident reasons, the perils inherent in it for the philosopher were incalculably increased with the advent, or, in the case of Judaism, with the crystallization into a definitive pattern, of the monotheistic prophetic religions – tending as they do to evolve a hard-and-fast concept of orthodoxy.

Nevertheless in his *Attainment of Happiness* (*Taḥṣīl al-saʿāda*), al-Fārābī did not hesitate to adopt a very exposed position. He declared that it was the philosopher's duty to engage in politics, that, in fact, the four terms philosopher, king, legislator, and imām (religious and political leader) were synonymous.[54]

This is an extreme to which no counterpart can be found in the *Guide;* no political role being explicitly assigned in this work to the philosophers. However, certain injunctions to a life of action occurring in it may be interpreted to mean that the philosopher ought not to keep away from public affairs.[55]

53. Plato's dialogues make it clear that the sentence of death passed on Socrates was no accident. It was the natural conclusion of his life. Plato's political activities in Syracuse, as known from his *Letters*, may also be called to mind in this connection.
54. See, for instance, *Taḥṣīl al-saʿāda* (Hyderabad, 1345 A.H.), pp. 43 f.
55. See, for instance, *Guide* III 54. There is also the conception of Moses expounded in the *Guide*. It may be interpreted to mean that he was more a philosopher than a prophet.

The point may also be made that Maimonides through his own activities was an exemplar of the Platonic philosopher-statesman. And this refers not only to *Mishneh Torah*, which codifies the Jewish law and consequently constitutes an eminently political achievement, but also to the *Guide* itself, which, as its Introduction makes clear, is not comparable, either in its external and internal structure or in its objectives, to the exclusively theoretical, systemized treatises of the philosophers. To some degree at least, the purpose that Maimonides had in mind when writing the *Guide* may be fairly described as political. This purpose, which will be more fully considered later on, aimed both at the legitimation of prophetic religion from the philosophic point of view and of philosophy from the religious. This means that it entailed *inter alia* the acceptance by the philosophers of the fact that not they and their intellectual masters but the prophets were the most suitable legislators of the community. The philosophic justification that this position needed was provided by a theory that was elaborated by al-Fārābī[56] and that was integrally taken over by Maimonides except as far as his conception of Moses is concerned. This theory propounds the following theses:

The prophets have the same kind of theoretical knowledge as the philosophers. They are, among other things, also philosophers. However, in contradistinction to the philosophers, they have a highly developed imaginative faculty. This faculty was conceived as being intermediate between the senses and the intellect, and in that capacity it was regarded by al-Fārābī as not only receiving and sometimes transforming the sense data, but also as being open to an influx coming from the intellect. The imaginative faculty was accordingly supposed to transform intellectual concepts into sensible images and thus to enable men endowed with the appropriate gifts to have veridical dreams and, in the waking state, prophetic visions. In addition, this faculty gave the prophets the power to convey their message and thereby ensure the adhesion and obedience of the common people. Thus imagination appears as the political faculty par excellence.

The teaching of the prophets cannot set forth the philosophic truths in explicit language, for it is addressed to men who are naturally quite incapable of under-

56. In *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* (*Arā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, ed. F. Dieterici [Leiden, 1895], pp. 47 ff.). In other works, for instance, in *Taḥṣīl al-saᶜāda*, pp. 43 f., al-Fārābī does not seem to admit any difference between the right kind of the philosopher and the prophet. For Maimonides' theory of prophecy, see *Guide* II 36. It should be added that the relation between the prophetic powers and the imaginative faculty was no novel discovery of al-Fārābī. He merely perfected a theory that has a long history in Greek philosophy. A kindred conception occurs in a text of Isaac Israeli (see A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli* [Oxford, 1958], pp. 135 ff.). For some of the problems connected with al-Fārābī's theory of prophecy, see also R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 206 ff. The first adequate recognition of the relation between al-Fārābī's and Maimonides' political theory is found in Leo Strauss' "Quelques Remarques" referred to above in n. 33.

standing these truths. It does, however, hint at them and must accordingly receive an allegorical interpretation. In fact, according to al-Fārābī, the various religions are a more or less close and accurate imitation or mimesis of philosophic truth.[57] This means of course that there is no essential difference between monotheistic prophetic religions, though they can be distinguished and evaluated according to the degree of their approximation to philosophic truth. This attitude toward the various religions could find a certain legitimation in the traditional Islamic doctrines. It was much harder to justify it from the Jewish point of view. We find accordingly an admittedly slight discrepancy between two consecutive chapters of the *Guide* II 39 and 40. In the first, Maimonides makes the categorical statement that there is only one divine law, namely, Judaism. On a cursory reading of II 40, one may get the impression that this statement is simply repeated there, but this may be an overhasty interpretation. For in this chapter Maimonides affirms that a religious law, which is not restricted to political and social arrangements but also attempts to propagate correct beliefs concerning God, the angels, and the world, is divine. It is clear from this chapter that Moses is the only legislator who received an authentic revelation of such a law and that the founders of other religions whose laws also inculcate more or less correct beliefs (Maimonides obviously has Muhammad in mind) are plagiarists. It is not as clear that the laws produced by these plagiarists are (except with regard to their origin) intrinsically and essentially inferior to Mosaic Law.

Al-Fārābī's doctrine of prophecy, taken over by Maimonides, was in its daring wide open to the attacks of the orthodox or would-be orthodox. This is particularly true with regard to the assertion made in the treatise on *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* that the essential difference between the philosophers and the prophets is to be found in the fact that the latter, as opposed to the former, are endowed with a powerful imagination; i.e., a faculty that they have in common with unenlightened nonphilosophic politicians.[58] In his treatise referred to above, al-Fārābī briefly alludes to people endowed with an active imagination, but having no access to things of the intellect. Maimonides elaborates and amplifies this statement in the *Guide* (II 37 and 38). His analysis will be discussed in the section on Avicenna.

Both al-Fārābī and Maimonides maintain that the prophet who is a lawgiver and the founder of a community is superior qua philosopher to most philosophers. In his treatise on *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*,[59] al-Fārābī affirms

57. The term "mimesis" calls to mind the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of poetry and art in general. And this is as it should be. There must clearly be a resemblance between the specific mode of utterance of the prophet and that of the poet – in so far as the two are held by the philosophers both to indicate and to conceal the ultimate truth.

58. *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, p. 52. 59. P. 52.

that the lawgiver achieves union with the Active Intellect (and thus perfect and complete cognition of all that can be intellectually cognized).[60] Al-Fārābī makes this assertion, though in his commentary on the *Ethics* he denies the possibility of such a union. But, as we have seen, he admits it in his treatise *On the Intellect*.[61] These contradictions may be due to an evolution in his thought. There is no absolute necessity, though there is a possibility, to impute them to the need in certain contexts to exalt the prophet-lawgiver in his philosophic capacity. Maimonides for his part does not explicitly state that Moses achieved this union, though this would have probably involved no inconsequence on his part, as he, according to the most probable interpretation of I 72, seems to have thought that this state could be attained by man. But this does not save him from being or appearing to be inconsistent, especially if his statements are compared to al-Fārābī's in the treatise on *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*. Al-Fārābī does not deny in this treatise that the prophet-lawgiver and philosopher who achieves union with the Active Intellect pursues his legislative and political activity with the help of his powerful imaginative faculty,[62] whereas Maimonides declares (II 33; cf. II 45 in fine) that, unlike the other prophets, Moses in the exercise of his prophecy made no use of the imagination and that in his case prophetic inspiration did not overflow onto this inferior faculty – the proof being that he did not prophesy in figures and parables. This statement seems to be wholly incompatible with Maimonides' often expressed view that it is through the strength of his imaginative faculty that a statesman is enabled to play an outstanding political role.

Both al-Fārābī and Maimonides compare the function of the prophet who is a lawgiver in the city he founds to that of God in the universe. But this was a hackneyed comparison, having been used and abused by the Greek Pythagoreans or neo-Pythagoreans in the theory of kingship. But Maimonides gives it a new twist and fills it with new meaning by combining it with a doctrine concerning the imitation of God that may be all his own. This doctrine will be referred to below.

Al-Fārābī (at least in his published works) is much less clear than Maimonides about the inability of the common run of man to establish a viable city. The relevant doctrine of the *Guide* will likewise be discussed below.

On the other hand there seems to me to be an indubitable, though a limited,

60. See his treatise on *The Political Regimes* (*al-Siyāsāt al-madaniyya*) (Hyderabad, 1346 A.H.), p. 49.

61. It should be stated that in this treatise he describes this union without referring to the prophets.

62. It should, however, be noted that in another work, the treatise on *The Political Regimes*, al-Fārābī does not mention the part played by the imaginative faculty in prophetic revelation. On this point Maimonides adopted the conception set forth in the treatise on *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*.

connection between al-Fārābī's admittedly very general views on the ideal virtuous city and Maimonides' notion of the Jewish community created by Moses and based on the Torah, which is assimilated by him to the ideal philosophic city.

A similarity between the two conceptions can be found not only in al-Fārābī's and Maimonides' description of the lawgiver of the city, but also in the fact that according to al-Fārābī the ideal city and according to Maimonides the Jewish community founded on the Torah assume the task of perfecting the intellects of their members and of guiding them toward philosophic truth. Those born to be philosophers are given the possibility to know the real nature of things, while the others are taught not the naked truth but the parables and metaphors by means of which the prophets render this truth accessible to the less gifted. As already stated, this is the mimesis of which al-Fārābī speaks. Maimonides sometimes applies to beliefs of this kind, instilled into people incapable of being philosophers, the term "true opinions" (III 27 and 28). It is in accord with the spirit of al-Fārābī's treatise on the virtuous city (p. 99) that Maimonides (II 40) lays down that the divine law, i.e., the Law of the Torah, inculcates correct opinions with regard to God and the angels.

There is, however, between al-Fārābī's conception and Maimonides' a marked shift of emphasis. In his known works al-Fārābī hardly alludes (or does not allude at all) to the practical, mundane tasks of the ideal city. He does not speak in this context (or, as far as I know, in any other) of the necessity and difficulties of overcoming by suitable devices the unsocial element existing in human nature, or of the historical contingencies that to a certain extent, one should have thought, must condition the emergent ideal city. These, however, are some of the main themes in Maimonides' analysis and justification of Judaism. It is a natural and readily explicable difference. Al-Fārābī's descriptions are in part generalized schemata for a nonexistent ideal city, which may be brought into being by revolutionary action. In depicting its structure, he is not bound by the servitudes of the past or the stubborn ill-conditioned facts of the present. Maimonides' task is incomparably more difficult. He has to give a philosophically valid proof that the commandments of Mosaic Law and the beliefs that, according to him, must be professed by every member of the Jewish community (or at least every member who is not a philosopher) qualify this community to be regarded as the ideal philosophic city. In order to fulfill this task he had quite obviously to fall back on anthropological and historical necessity. This is not meant as an allegation that he did not believe in the capital importance of these factors. I am persuaded that on this point his apologetics were in line with his genuine convictions. These questions will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, which deals with Maimonides' relation to Avicenna.

Avicenna

Avicenna (d. 1036) is the only eminent philosopher considered as belonging to the Aristotelian school with regard to whom Maimonides, in his letter to Ibn Tibbon, expresses some reservations and even some distrust. From a certain point of view this attitude is quite understandable. On his own showing, Avicenna was no orthodox Peripatetic at all (he rather tends to overemphasize his freedom from this tradition). And he certainly put forward new views that explain, though they do not justify, the accusation leveled against him by Averroes that he tried to contaminate the philosophic doctrine with suitably modified ideas deriving in the last analysis from the kalām. This charge was characteristic for the rigoristic school of Spanish Aristotelianism, to which both Averroes and, albeit to a lesser extent, Maimonides belonged.

Nevertheless, Avicenna's fame and philosophic authority stood high even in Spain and the Maghrib, as is proven by the repeated references to him in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, the philosophic novel of Maimonides' elder contemporary Ibn Ṭufayl.

Moreover, Avicenna's system, which teaches *inter alia* that the individual soul survives the death of the body and lives eternally, and which regards the mystical experience of the ṣūfis as a valid subject for philosophic investigation and attempts to utilize it in its theory of prophecy, is much more consonant with religious feeling – to use a modern, anachronistic, and perhaps irrelevant term – and doubtless also with religion *tout court* as conceived in the Middle Ages than the doctrine of the orthodox Aristotelians. If Maimonides had been the eclectic and the apologist he is sometimes thought to have been, and if his aim had been merely to devise some sort of a compromise between, and amalgam of, philosophy and a religion freed from the reproach of backwardness and obscurantism, Avicenna would have provided the perfect solution both because of his teaching and of his reputation. He might have been regarded as giving religion, or at least the varieties of religious experience, the hallmark of intellectual respectability. The fact that, regarding the crucial point in which religion and prophecy are involved, Maimonides did not follow Avicenna's lead (though he did so with respect to other questions), indicates the quality of his feeling about philosophic truth as he saw it. It shows that he was not interested in apologetics at any price, or even in apologetics at all, if the word means the cutting and pruning of philosophic theory so that it should accord with religious dogmas.

I do not, of course, wish to contradict Maimonides' express statements that he wanted to bring about in the mind of the various classes of his readers a conciliation between religion and philosophy. But it seems to me that he thought to achieve this result not through a doctrinal, consistent compromise, but through the use or

misuse of semantic interpretation, the recourse to a sometimes accurate and sometimes deliberately inaccurate style, through a technique of over- and underemphasis in some of his theoretical expositions, and, as he says himself, through deliberate self-contradiction.

It may be asserted with a certain plausibility that Maimonides shows traces of being contaminated by Avicennian doctrines in two fields: (1) metaphysics, i.e., the doctrine of being and of God, and (2) the theory of prophecy. It may be added that his recourse to Avicenna's metaphysical doctrines possibly exemplifies some of the techniques of indirection mentioned above.

The metaphysical doctrines in question are concerned with the notions of essence and existence, and of necessary and contingent. Avicenna contended (and, because of this contention, was taken to task by Averroes and charged with introducing suitably modified kalām teaching into philosophy) that in all being, except God, there is a duality consisting of essence and existence. The essences by themselves have, contrary to the Platonic ideas, no existence; they are neutral with respect to being. With regard to them existence is an accident, which may or may not supervene. Hence all beings except God are contingent, or, to use the medieval Arabic and Hebrew term, possible; God, in whom the difference between essence and existence does not exist, is the only necessary being.

This doctrine, which is neither Aristotelian nor, as far as we know, found in the genuine writings of al-Fārābī, is quite evidently referred to and taken over by Maimonides in the beginning of II 57.

What are the implications of this deviation from the strict Aristotelian doctrine if one considers Maimonides' philosophic position as a whole? Prima facie they seem to be considerable. For according to this view the existence of the universe ceases to be the primary datum postulated by Aristotle, beyond which one cannot and must not go; the cosmos is no longer taken for granted. Considered by itself, it is an accident that might not have occurred. Should one add (for the last phrase might seem unsatisfactory, attributing as it does the existence of the universe to chance): that might not have occurred but for the will of God?

Avicenna leaves no loophole for such an interpretation, if it implies that God might have chosen not to create a universe at all, or not this universe but a different one. In fact, in his philosophic system the contingent character of the world merely veils and disguises the essential necessity of the latter. For every contingent being is only contingent if it is taken by itself, but is ineluctably necessary if it is considered in relation to the concatenation of causes and effects starting with the First Cause, God, to which it owes its existence. In fact, Avicenna's system is strictly deterministic. And this determinism extends to God and His activity. There is no room in this philosophy for Leibnitz' conception of a God choosing among the

various possible worlds the one that is the best of all and bringing it into existence. The universe could not have been other than it is, there being no element of choice about God's causative function.

Thus Maimonides' adoption of Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence and the fact that, like Avicenna, he differentiates on the basis of this distinction between necessary and contingent being had either no bearing at all on his position in the question of God's freedom of will and of action – on which, according to the *Guide* the conflict between religion and philosophy hinges – or if he gave unqualified support to the Avicennian doctrine, should have impelled him to negate this freedom.[63]

It is more relevant from Maimonides' point of view to note that the terminology and notional framework of Avicenna's doctrine tended to emphasize God's remoteness from human conception. This is a cardinal point of Maimonides' theology; it is also one of the most frequently cited, but it may not have the meaning and the implications usually ascribed to it.

According to Maimonides' often expressed assertion, God should not be regarded as having any positive attributes pertaining to His essence and superadded to it; any positive attribute describing Him should be given a negative meaning (I 52, 53, 56, 57, 58). Thus His being characterized as wise or living merely signifies that He is not ignorant or dead, but has no reference at all to anything we can recognize as wisdom or life. This applies even to His existence, which beyond the homonymy has nothing in common with anything we conceive as existence (I 56). This is a radical doctrine and Maimonides obviously takes pains to place it in the foreground of his "divine science." Now this negative theology was no intrinsic or important part of the traditional Aristotelian system. It does not play any conspicuous part in al-Fārābī's doctrines. It does, however, in Avicenna's,[64] and this fact may, as I believe, justify my discussing the problems involved in this particular context. It seems probable that it was Avicenna who conferred upon negative theology the philosophic reputability that made it possible for Maimonides to introduce it as the apparently central part of his, i.e., the philosophic, doctrine of God; in fact he lays even greater stress upon it and uses more radical formulas than Avicenna. For that matter, it may be taken as pretty certain that in formulating his views on this point Maimonides also used texts belonging to authors who, from the Aristotelian point of view, were much less

63. It may be apposite to remark in this connection that in my opinion the commonly held view that Maimonides qua philosopher believed in the freedom of man's will and action is mistaken, if one accepts the current definitions of such freedom. See the preliminary observation made in S. Pines, "Abu'l-Barakāt's Poetics and Metaphysics," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, VI, "Studies in Philosophy" (Jerusalem, 1960), Excursus, pp. 195–98.

64. See "Abu'l-Barakāt's Poetics and Metaphysics," pp. 163–65.

respectable than Avicenna; thus he may have utilized Neo-Platonic writings[65] or perhaps even the book on *The Duties of the Hearts* of the Jewish mystic Baḥya. He manages, however, to give his negative theology a very personal touch. By affirming the absolute transcendence of God, it proposes to man the cosmos as his highest and main study.

In this context Maimonides' insistence (I 59) on the value of the cognition of the various negative attributes should be mentioned. A similar approach may be found in mystical writings, but Maimonides is no mystic. His intention is not to recommend progressive detachment from the knowledge of all things that are not God, but to further that kind of knowledge by teaching people to avoid misplaced references to God's essence.

Moses, whose request to apprehend God's essence was refused because it was impossible to fulfil it, was granted another boon: he achieved knowledge of God's workings in the universe (I 54). These divine activities, taken in conjunction with the various descriptions and qualifications given to them by people judging them from the human point of view, represent God's attributes of action. On one hand knowledge of these attributes is the only positive knowledge concerning God possible to man. On the other hand this knowledge – if it is unadulterated by human moral judgment – can practically be equated with the grasp of the sequence and (natural) causes of the natural phenomena.

Thus Maimonides is quite consistent when, in a formula that forcibly calls to mind Spinoza,[66] he speaks of "divine," i.e., natural, actions (III 32). The study of nature and of the order of nature is the only way open to man to know something of God.

The import of these views may be realized more clearly if one considers the reinterpretation of biblical terms that Maimonides has in mind. His attributes of action are such terms as "Merciful" or "Revengeful" applied to God. According to Maimonides expressions of this kind originate in man's teleological anthropocentric interpretation of the inhuman, self-conserving, and self-perpetuating order of nature. Thus God is sometimes called "Merciful" because in accordance with that order the embryos of animals develop satisfactorily and parents have been endowed with the instinct to protect their children. Or He is called "Revengeful" because, again in accordance with the order of nature, storms, floods, earthquakes, and wars work destruction. One is again reminded of Spinoza's attacks on the ascription of a finalistic man-centered causality to Nature, or to call it by another name, to God.

65. Some of which had no doubt influenced Avicenna himself in his exposition of negative theology.
66. Whose expression, "God or Nature" (*Deus sive natura*), may have been, at least in part, suggested by this passage of the *Guide*.

Anticipating a little, I shall add that this interpretation of the attributes of action enables Maimonides to explain in a rather unusual way what the imitation of God required by the philosophers and by the Jewish tradition really means. Of this more hereafter. It may also be noted in this connection that the fact that the *Guide* is centered on a reinterpretation of the Bible and other religious Jewish texts leads Maimonides to stress what one may call the naturalistic aspect of his thought. In some respects he gives it a more striking, because more controversial, expression than the Arabic Aristotelian philosophers, with whom he is in essential agreement on these matters.

The discussion of Maimonides' negative theology can be fittingly followed by a reference to his conception of God's intellectual activity, not because the two are complementary, but because they appear to be contradictory. The second doctrine has in the last analysis its source in Aristotle and is expounded by all the Peripatetic philosophers, but its conjunction with radical negative theology is by no means usual and may not be attested at all before the advent of Avicenna's philosophy. Maimonides for his part gives this doctrine an interpretation that brings out, more than Avicenna's does, its incompatibility with negative theology.

The doctrine in question states (see I 68; cf. I 53) that God is engaged in intellectual cognition, and that He is both the subject and the object of cognition and the cognitive activity, three in one. This conception derives from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ, and the philosophic proposition embodying it, which is quoted by Maimonides at the beginning of I 68, represents a stock formula used by practically all Aristotelian philosophers. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics* this conception ties up with the idea that God only cognizes Himself, because all other things are unworthy of being known by Him. If, in accordance with a probable intention of Aristotle, the last statement is interpreted as excluding God's cognition of the ideas or the universals, the content of God's cognition would be most strictly circumscribed.

Whatever Avicenna's position on this point may be (and the fact is that he apparently does not favor this exclusion), it is evident that the statement that God cognizes and the consequent assertions that He cognizes Himself or Himself and the forms or essences assimilated to Himself are positive statements and as such in contradiction with the spirit and tendency of negative theology. In the face of such statements any attempt to make out a case for God's cognition having nothing except homonymy in common with man's cognition may easily seem mere quibbling; and yet only such an attempt can satisfy negative theology. Avicenna tacitly leaves the question open,[67] for he does not make a comparison

67. See *The Book of the Healing of the Soul* (*Kitāb shifāʾ al-nafs*) (Teheran, lithographed), II, 586 ff. (The pages are not numbered.)

and indicate an essential similarity between God's knowledge and man's. Other Arabic philosophers do not, as far as I am aware, do this either. Maimonides, on the other hand, goes out of his way to point out the similarity. In order to drive this home he shows the relatedness of two Aristotelian doctrines, which, as far as I know, nobody beforehand had regarded as closely connected. Nevertheless, Maimonides may be said to make his point.

One of these doctrines, the one that in substance is set forth in *Metaphysics* Λ, proclaims that in God the subject, object, and act of intellectual cognition are identical. The other doctrine is expounded in Aristotle's *De anima*. It concerns intellectual activity in general, and first and foremost the human variety of that activity, and asserts that in intellectual cognition the subject is identical with the object. In order to illustrate this conception Maimonides uses (probably deliberately) a humble example: the intellect of a man who cognizes the separate form of a piece of wood is identical with this form and because such is its nature is also identical with the act of intellection. Thus, as Maimonides explicitly states, man's intellect manifests when actualized exactly the same kind of threefold identity as God's. Obviously this view goes counter to negative theology. It may be recalled in this connection that in his Introduction to the *Guide* Maimonides states that for reasons given by him he deliberately inserted into this work contradictory theses (one false and one correct). Is this an instance of this didactic method, and if so, which of the two doctrines represents Maimonides' real opinion? Prima facie either of them is admissible.

The example of the form of wood used by Maimonides does, however, make another point pretty clear. Though Maimonides does not explicitly say so, it follows from the analogy he draws between God's and man's intellectual activity that God's knowledge is not only confined to His own essence, if the latter is conceived as not including the forms that are also the objects of human science. However, if He does cognize the system of forms (and we may add, using a later term, of natural laws) subsisting in the universe, He must be held (in virtue of the Aristotelian thesis stressed by Maimonides) to be identical with these forms and laws, i.e., with the scientific system of the universe. This would make Him out to be something coming perilously close to Spinoza's attribute of thought (or to his "Intellect of God").

I should add that, while it is pretty clear that these are the evident consequences of Maimonides' view, it may be argued that he may have been guilty of that inconsistency of not having drawn these conclusions. In this particular case this point of view would amount to a grave and, in my opinion, very implausible accusation of muddle-headedness directed against Maimonides.

As far as political philosophy and the doctrines regarding prophecy and religious observances are concerned, there are several points in which Avicenna's

influence on Maimonides may be discerned with some degree of precision. In other cases a general resemblance between the views of the two philosophers may be noted, but the similarity may not be so close as to demonstrate that Avicenna was the direct source of Maimonides. The relation between their views on the political and social function of prophecy is of the second kind.

Like Avicenna, Maimonides believed on the one hand that man is a social animal in the sense that he cannot live, or at least cannot have a satisfactory life, except within a political community. On the other hand, both of them are of the opinion (which may not have been held by al-Fārābī), that the common run of men, if left to themselves, are unfit by nature to establish such a community. However, the reasons they give for the second thesis are different. According to Avicenna[68] the inability of average men to create by their own unaided efforts a political society that would be viable is due to the fact that people if left to their own devices find it impossible to agree upon a common law valid for all, because everyone thinks that the things that accord with his own interests are right and that the things that are unfavorable to him are wrong. Consequently men are naturally hostile to one another. Only a prophet, i.e., a man endowed with certain faculties not found in the common run of people, can create a social bond between them and thus preserve them from the calamities and the destruction that wait upon the solitary.

Maimonides' position is essentially not very different, but he formulates it in another way (II 40). According to him the inability of men to constitute viable society is due to the great differences subsisting between the human individuals with respect to their character and moral qualities; to cite an example, some men are very cruel, while others are averse to hurting even an insect. Only a leader endowed with special gifts can weld people who present such an enormous range of differences (which is greater than any that can be found between the individuals of any other animal species) into one society and make them submit to a law binding on all.

According to both Avicenna and Maimonides the fact that such lawgivers appear is due to a teleological provision of nature (II 40). It is true that Avicenna attributes this device to primary providence, but in this context the two terms are interchangeable, as he makes clear by comparing the appearance of prophets and their legislative activities with such useful contrivances of nature as eyelashes and the concavity of the soles. There seems, however, to be a certain divergency, perhaps more apparent than real, between Avicenna's and Maimonides' view of these lawgivers. In his magnum opus, *The Book of the Healing of the Soul*, Avicenna

68. The relevant views of Avicenna referred to in this context may be found *ibid.*, pp. 646 ff.

appears to take it for granted that all such legislators are prophets, imposing upon their community a monotheistic religion. It is inconceivable that Avicenna, who was familiar with Greek philosophic and scientific literature and no doubt also with Arabic historical and geographical texts, did not know better than to extrapolate from Islamic and Jewish history and to suppose that all other legislations had a similar origin. From his point of view this statement must have been inaccurate (perhaps deliberately so), unless one supposes that, in the teeth of much of the evidence available to him, he believed that in every community there had existed a primitive monotheism instituted by a prophet.

Maimonides' position is much more understandable and much easier to defend. It is based on al-Fārābī's psychological analysis of prophecy, according to which prophets are characterized by an unusual vigor both of their intellectual and their imaginative faculties. In this connection Maimonides makes the point (II 37 and 38) that philosophers can be differentiated from the prophets by the fact that only their intellectual capacity, and not their imagination, is outstanding. Symmetry seems to require that there should be a third category of people, namely, those who do not have an extraordinary intellectual ability (and are, consequently, no philosophers), but have a strong imagination. In Maimonides' opinion these are the characteristics of those lawgivers who are no prophets and of politicians and also of sorcerers. In this way Maimonides propounds a definition of the nonphilosophic statesmen, a problem that exercised Plato in relation to such men as Themistocles, Pericles, and lesser politicians. Except for a brief passage of al-Fārābī referred to above, I know of no earlier text in which such an analysis occurs. Obviously it gives Maimonides the possibility – of which Avicenna in *The Book of the Healing of the Soul* deprives himself – to give an acceptable explanation for the origin of laws in "idolatrous" or "unreligious" communities not founded by prophets, the evident inference being that their founders were legislators lacking true philosophic insight.

It may be added that by establishing this category Maimonides laid himself wide open to attack. It was an easy point to make that there is no scriptural evidence whatever that the biblical prophets were philosophers, and Spinoza makes it.[69] He believes that the distinctive characteristic of these prophets, including Moses, was the force of their imagination; in other words he relegates them to the category of the nonphilosophic lawgivers and politicians with which he was familiar through his study of the *Guide*. This modification of the theory of the *Guide* by Spinoza is no doubt unfortunate from the point of view of a disciple of Maimonides, but it is also fairly natural. Any unprejudiced comparison of the doctrine with the facts was apt to suggest it. In passing, we may wonder whether

69. See *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, chaps. i and ii, and *passim*.

Maimonides and al-Fārābī permitted themselves to be aware of the lack of any historical evidence for the contention that the prophets were philosophers; but this is an unprofitable speculation. However, Maimonides fairly certainly knew that his (and al-Fārābī's) view that in all essentials the prophets only differed from the philosophers by having a more vigorous imagination was regarded as derogatory to the former.[70] This being the case, it is surely significant that he had so little use for Avicenna's attempt to elucidate the phenomenon of prophecy by assimilating it to the recorded experiences of the mystics – to whom as well as to the prophets he applied the term "gnostics" (*ʿārifūn*). These "gnostics" appeared to have a different and more impressive way of acceding to divine things than the philosophers, and it is possible that they can progress further than the latter.

It is at least probable that Maimonides had read texts setting forth this explanation of prophecy; indeed he may have borrowed several ideas and terms used by Avicenna in this connection; and yet he was not prepared to accept the doctrine as a whole, although it was put forward by an eminent philosopher and might have rendered his position much easier in the face of the attacks of the orthodox. No doubt the temper of his mind was against it. He was also schooled in a different philosophic tradition.

Avicenna's doctrine[71] that the prophet and men belonging to that category had natural faculties that enabled them to work so-called miracles does not seem to be referred to by Maimonides either. It was probably less objectionable from the Aristotelian point of view than the attempt to allow supreme validity to mystical experience, but it may have seemed to Maimonides dubious and, even worse, irrelevant. He may, however, have borrowed from Avicenna[72] the image of flashes of lightnings used in the Introduction to the *Guide* and usually interpreted as applying to the inspirations of prophecy. However, as we shall see, there are some grounds for thinking that in the passage in question he may have drawn also on another source. The image is frequent, and its significations can be very different.

Avicenna's influence can perhaps be recognized in another particular, namely, in Maimonides' statement that the prophets can reach knowledge of reality without having previously grasped the apparently necessary theoretical premises to this knowledge (II 38). Parallels to this view can be found in Avicenna's works.[73]

70. Ibn Ṭufayl, who was somewhat older than Maimonides, but can rate as the latter's contemporary, blames al-Fārābī for regarding philosophy as superior to religion (*Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, p. 14).
71. See *Kitāb al-ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, ed. J. Forget (Leiden, 1892), pp. 208 f.
72. *K. al-ishārāt*, pp. 202 f. Ibn Ṭufayl draws upon this passage in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, pp. 6 f.
73. See, for instance, Avicenna, *Risāla fī ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, *Tisʿ rasāʾil* (Cairo, 1908), pp. 122 f. Avicenna justifies this view on theoretical grounds.

In *The Book of the Healing of the Soul* Avicenna briefly refers to the prophets instituting prayers, religious feasts, sacrifices, and whatever else pertains to an established religion. But whatever similarities there may exist between this short passage and Maimonides' detailed explanations of the reasons for the various commandments are rather vague.

There is perhaps a better warrant for attributing to a direct or indirect influence of Avicenna the rather uncharacteristic passage in III 32 in which Maimonides, in order to bring home to the readers the historical reasons for various cultic commandments such as the prescriptions concerning sacrifices and to make it clear to them that the force of habit is quite as strong in their times as in those of Moses, envisages the (impossible) hypothesis that a prophet would call upon Maimonides' contemporaries to replace the prescribed religious offices, the fasts, and the prayers addressed to God in times of disaster by simple meditation. Maimonides implies (1) that no prophet could do this with any hope of success because of the fact that people cling to traditional customs, and (2) that, apart from such considerations, meditation regarded as a form of the worship of God is superior to verbal prayer. This is in the main the thesis of Avicenna in his *Treatise on Prayer*[74] – written, as he informs us, in less than half an hour – if we assimilate, as we legitimately may, Maimonides' meditation to Avicenna's spiritual prayer, which he opposes to the exoteric prayer prescribed by religious Law. Elsewhere Maimonides uses another expression that is even more reminiscent of Avicenna's views. He speaks of "rational worship," upon which man should be intent in solitude, and which consists in being close to God in truth and not through the impressions of the imagination (III 51).

The various points discussed above tend to show that at a certain level of philosophic thought Avicenna had considerable influence upon Maimonides; this is indicated by the latter's adoption of negative theology, of the distinction between essence and existence, and of various particulars of Avicenna's prophetology and theory of the worship of God. This influence, however (even when Avicennian theses were not taken over merely for the purposes of window-dressing), did not essentially modify Maimonides' fundamental position, which he inherited from al-Fārābī and the Spanish Aristotelian school. In fact, as has already been suggested, the importance of a comparison between his doctrines and Avicenna's is to be found partly in the fact that it permits us to gauge the steadfastness of Maimonides' (often tacit) rejection of philosophic beliefs that were much less obnoxious from the religious point of view than his own.

This applies *inter alia* to Avicenna's belief in the immortality of the individual souls, which Maimonides – like other Aristotelians – did not share qua philosopher.

74. *Risālat al-ṣalāt*, in *Jāmiᶜ al-badāᵓiᶜ* (Cairo, 1917), pp. 2–14.

This negative attitude is quite evident. But apparently he did not regard this as a crucial problem for the relations between philosophy and religion. It is remarkable how little space – even if one counts the indirect references – he devotes to it in the *Guide*.

One of the passages in question appears to refer to Avicenna (I 74, seventh way); for it is pretty certain that he is the "modern philosopher" who is said by Maimonides to have tried to prove that the doctrine of the eternity of the world is not incompatible with belief in the afterlife of the individual soul. For, despite an unnamed adversary's argument, it is not impossible that an infinite number of immaterial souls should exist. This would have been impossible only if these souls were in a place and had a local position. The infinity of the number of the disembodied souls is a corollary of the Aristotelian assumption that mankind is as eternal as the world. Maimonides does not endorse this argument and makes it pretty clear that he rejects Avicenna's views on the afterlife of the soul and that he has a certain preference for Ibn Bājja's position. This is not fortuitous. As may be seen from the letter to Ibn Tibbon, Maimonides' attitude toward Ibn Bājja is not marked by the reticence that he shows toward Avicenna.

Ibn Bājja

This is understandable. Ibn Bājja (d. 1138)[75] was the founder of the Spanish school of Aristotelian philosophy, to which Maimonides belonged and which derived from al-Fārābī rather than from Avicenna; and he could not be, or at least was not, accused of teaching a doctrinally too lax and pliant philosophy. He was, however, by no means a mere disciple but an innovator full of ideas that were heterodox, if they were considered from the point of view of Aristotle or, for that matter, of al-Fārābī. He was often criticized on this count by the faithful Aristotelian Averroes, who nevertheless respected him, as did Maimonides.

In rejecting Avicenna's view concerning the disembodied soul, Maimonides makes one of his few explicit references to Ibn Bājja. He credits this philosopher quite correctly[76] with having made clear that as far as only the pure intellect is concerned there are no individual differences. In other words, Aristotle qua intellect is identical with the other "happy ones"; they are not a multiplicity of beings, but "one." The intellect being regarded as the only portion of man that survives bodily death, this doctrine of Ibn Bājja means that, contrary to Avicenna, nothing individual remains after death.

75. In dealing with the relation between Ibn Bājja and Maimonides I have made some use of the as yet unpublished thesis of L. V. Berman, *Ibn Bājjah and Maimonides*, submitted in 1959 to the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

76. See, for instance, *Risālat al-ittiṣāl*, ed. by A. F. al-Ahwani, in the volume containing his edition of Averroes' *Kitāb al-nafs* (Cairo, 1950), pp. 115 f.

As has already been stated, Maimonides seems to incline to this opinion of Ibn Bājja, yet he does not wholly commit himself, these being, according to him, "hidden matters" (I 74, seventh way).

It may be added that while the so-called Arabic and Jewish Aristotelian philosophers – with the sizable exception of al-Kindī, Avicenna, and their respective disciples – did not as a rule believe in individual afterlife, Ibn Bājja was perhaps the first to have formulated a clear and consistent philosophic position on this point. It was a position which Judah Hallevi,[77] who was by and large Ibn Bājja's contemporary, was acquainted with and which he rejected, but which was taken over with modifications due to a different conception of the intellect by Averroes and his Jewish disciples. As we have seen, the latter had a certain justification for believing that Maimonides sided with them, at least in so far as they accepted some fundamental ideas belonging to the original theory of Ibn Bājja.

Ibn Bājja's frequently expressed belief that union with the Active Intellect conceived as the last in the series of the ten separate intellects was possible to man pretty certainly influenced, at least to some extent, the views expounded by Maimonides concerning Moses. As we have seen, al-Fārābī, in spite of some texts that appeared to regard such a union as possible, was held by Averroes, on account of other quite equivocal texts, to consider it as an impossibility.

Ibn Bājja's impact on Maimonides' thought can occasionally be traced not only in his conceptions but also in his imagery, notably in the imagery used in a striking passage of the Introduction to the *Guide*.

Speaking of man's (generally limited) understanding of the secrets of the Torah, which are none other than the truths of physics and metaphysics, Maimonides states in this passage, which has already been referred to above, that some of us see lightning flashes in the dark night that encompasses us. Moses saw these flashes continuously, so that his night was turned as it were into day; others see during the whole of their life only a few flashes; others again only one. It is they who are referred to in Numbers 11:25: "And they prophesied, but they did so no more." There are also people who are not able to see lightning flashes, but who see in the darkness of the night some light coming from polished bodies such as certain stones. There exists of course also a category of men who see no light at all.

The interpretation of this text poses some problems. The most obvious solution would perhaps be to suppose that the people seeing the lightnings are the prophets conceived in Avicennian fashion as endowed with a faculty of intuitive intellection, which enables them to arrive at true and certain conclusions without

77. It is the philosophic position outlined in the philosopher's exposé in *Kuzari*, I 1. In the fifth book of the *Kuzari*, Judah Hallevi expounds and criticizes a different philosophic doctrine, that of Avicenna. But he seems to suggest in V 14 that if one accepts the Aristotelian premises, Ibn Bājja's conclusions might be the logical ones.

having to know the premises and the intermediate links of reasoning that lead up to these conclusions. On this hypothesis the people who only see by the light coming from polished bodies could be the philosophers. However, a passage occurring in one of Ibn Bājja's works[78] lends color to a different interpretation (which, however, may not be wholly incompatible with the first). Like Maimonides, Ibn Bājja distinguishes three categories of men. There are those who resemble nonpolished surfaces, or, to use, as Ibn Bājja does, a second simile, they resemble people who see only such light as is reflected from bodies. Then there are those who may be likened to a polished surface, or again to people seeing the sun in a mirror. Finally there are the happy ones, such as Aristotle, who may be likened to the sun itself, or, to use another simile employed by Ibn Bājja, may be said to have a direct view of it.

In Ibn Bājja's doctrine these distinctions have the following meaning: the men belonging to the first category lack any kind of theoretical knowledge; they are the common run of people. After them come the men of science and the theoretical thinkers who use only discursive reasoning and have as their starting point the empirical data. It is that latter fact which is referred to in the statement that they see only reflected light. The third category is that of the supreme philosophers who have achieved union with the Active Intellect and thereby an immediate, intuitive, and certain knowledge of all the systems of sciences.

The images used by Maimonides and Ibn Bājja with reference to the men belonging to the second category being similar, it may be presumed that Maimonides too assigns this category to the men whose theoretical knowledge is dependent on empirical data and discursive thought.

Pursuing this analogy, one may conclude – as I believe, correctly – that the higher kind of men (in the passage of the *Guide*) who see lightning flashes should be equated with those who have intuitive theoretical knowledge. At this point, however, either the analogy fails us altogether or we are faced in Maimonides' text with a fundamental ambiguity. To Ibn Bājja's mind, the men endowed with intuitive knowledge are philosophers, Aristotle being a supreme exemplar. In Maimonides' text on the other hand, Moses appears as the only man permanently endowed with complete intuitive knowledge. This might mean that Moses, the quality of whose prophecy has, as Maimonides states elsewhere, nothing in common with that of the other prophets, is to be regarded as the supreme philosopher, "the Master of those who know" as the *Guide* calls him in other passages. As has already been stated, it is the appellation applied by Dante to Aristotle. However, the use of the quotation from Numbers suggests (though in my opinion it does

78. *Risālat al-ittiṣāl*, pp. 115 f. On p. 114 Ibn Bājja introduces, evidently under Platonic influence, a somewhat simplified version of the parable of the "cave."

not conclusively prove) that all men seeing the lightning flashes are prophets. This might mean that Maimonides confined intuitive knowledge to prophets, and this interpretation might be thought to be corroborated by Maimonides' stating, in conformity with Avicenna's views, that prophets are able to arrive at conclusions without knowing the logically necessary premises. However, if this were the correct explanation, Maimonides' failure clearly to affirm and bring out the difference in kind between the theoretical knowledge of the prophets (other than Moses) and that of the philosophers and the essential superiority of the former over the latter would be quite inexplicable.[79] Moreover the Aristotelian school professed, with very few exceptions[80] or none, belief both in the superiority of intuitive knowledge over the discursive (i.e., in the superiority of *nous* over *dianoia*, to use the Greek terms) and in the ability of the philosophers to attain intuitive knowledge. Both beliefs are especially in evidence in the Aristotelian school of Spain, first and foremost in the writings of Ibn Bājja. When Maimonides borrowed a part of his imagery from Ibn Bājja he must have been aware that all his readers who were more or less familiar with the main philosophic texts of his times would tend to identify the men seeing the lightning flashes with the highest type of philosopher and not, as the passage might suggest, with the prophets. It would seem that in this case as in many others Maimonides deliberately aimed at ambiguity.[81]

In pointed contrast to al-Fārābī, who considered that political activity was, if circumstances permitted it, a most essential duty of the philosopher, Ibn Bājja

79. In I 62 Maimonides refers in his interpretation of a talmudic passage to man's knowledge of the Active Intellect. He does not in any way suggest that such knowledge is confined to prophets. It should be noted that in a nonphilosophic work of Maimonides, namely, his *Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin* (see *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, sixth fundamental dogma of Judaism, ed. J. Holzer [Berlin, 1901], p. 23) the prophets are said to achieve union with the Active Intellect. The philosophers are not mentioned; in the context any reference to them would have been wholly out of place. It may be added that no certain conclusions as to Maimonides' point of view in the *Guide* can be drawn from his statements in this commentary.

80. Al-Fārābī – but not, in my opinion, Avicenna – might have been one (though he was not, at least if one accepts the evidence of the texts, a consistent one). In al-Fārābī's case it seems to me that at least sometimes he negated altogether the possibility of intuitive theoretical knowledge (other than knowledge of axiomatic truths). Avicenna, on the one hand, clearly believed in the possibility of such knowledge. On the other, it is highly improbable, in spite of his interest in, and exposition of, mystical experiences, that he intended to restrict this kind of knowledge to the mystics and the prophets.

81. *Guide* I 62 refers in the interpretation of a talmudic passage to the grasp of the Active Intellect by a human individual. In the context it is clear that this intellectual achievement is possible for men other than Moses (who is not mentioned in the passage). On the other hand, it is clear that if man is capable of grasping the Active Intellect, this degree was attained by Moses.

held[82] that under the unfavorable conditions prevailing in his time, conditions that were not likely to be changed for the better in any foreseeable future, there was no possibility of working for the creation of a philosophic city. It may be argued that this position merely implies a shift of emphasis away from politics and statesmanship rather than a doctrinal opposition to al-Fārābī. However, it transforms the whole temper of Ibn Bājja's philosophy. He advises the philosopher to choose solitude and loneliness as his lot in his own country; but he should commune in spirit with his fellow philosophers, those who lived before him and those who live like himself in isolation in various, sometimes distant countries. Ibn Bājja was able to adopt this view, because he believed that man's supreme goal was union with the Active Intellect, and that this union was not dependent upon living in the ideal philosophic city but could be achieved in solitude. Some remarks of Maimonides may echo the conception or the vocabulary used by Ibn Bājja when dealing with these problems; his recommendation of solitude with a view to rational meditation in III 51 may be a case in point. A more significant instance occurs in II 36, in a passage in which Maimonides speaks of the human individual apt to be a prophet. He describes him as a perfect solitary, who regards the common run of human beings as either domestic animals or beasts of prey. Such a superior person has only two wishes in his sometimes unavoidable dealings with the multitude of his inferiors: (1) to avoid being harmed by them, and (2) to make such use of them as his material necessities may oblige him to. This passage indubitably reflects both in terminology and in spirit Ibn Bājja's thought. On the other hand it does not, if it is taken by itself, give an adequate idea of the attitude of Maimonides.

Apart from the passage quoted above, Ibn Bājja is mentioned by name in three passages of the *Guide*. Two of these (II 9 and II 24) deal with his astronomical views. The second of these passages indicates that Ibn Bājja was one of the initiators of the revolt of the Spanish Aristotelians against the dominance of the Ptolemaic system. The third passage (III 29) quotes a statement of Ibn Bājja made in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*,[83] which refers to the conception that God is the spirit of a body constituted by the celestial sphere and the stars.

Chronologically Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185) comes between Ibn Bājja, who is mentioned by him in a cursory survey of Islamic philosophy, and Averroes, whom he

82. This view is one of the main themes of his *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid* (*The Regime of the Solitary*) and accounts for the title of this work, edited, with a Spanish translation, by M. Asín Palacios (Madrid, 1946).

83. This commentary, which was believed to have been lost (see *inter alia* S. Munk's French translation of the *Guide* [Paris, 1866], III, 222, n. 3), was recognized by me as being one of the texts figuring in MS Pococke 206 of the Bodleian Library, which constitutes a collection of Ibn Bājja's work.

helped in the beginnings of his career. Ibn Ṭufayl seems to have been, if one considers his times and his country (i.e., the West of the Islamic world, which includes Spain and the Maghrib), a rather unusual sort of philosopher as he was preoccupied with the mystical or semimystical aspects of Avicenna's thought. There is no explicit reference to him or to his philosophy in the *Guide*, and there is no evidence to show that Maimonides was in any way influenced by Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophic tale *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*.

Averroes

The relation between Maimonides and Averroes (d. 1198) presents much greater interest, though there is no conclusive proof that at the time of the writing of the *Guide* Maimonides was in any way influenced by Averroes' doctrines. His commendation of that philosopher's commentaries in the letter to Ibn Tibbon is of a later date; and in another[84] letter written to his disciple Joseph ben Judah, who is the addressee of the epistle with which the *Guide* opens, Maimonides states that he has just received these commentaries except the one on *De sensu et sensibili* but has not yet read them through. He adds a word of praise for their correctness. This letter was written at a time when he had completed some portions of the *Guide*.

It may of course be argued that this fact does not preclude the possibility that Averroes' views may have had some impact on the part of the *Guide* that had not as yet been written. For that matter Maimonides may have had cognizance of philosophic works of Averroes other than the commentaries before he began working on the *Guide*. But, as far as I can see, no clear evidence can be adduced for either of these suppositions.[85] On the other hand, there is an overwhelming presumption that when he was engaged in working on the *Guide* he had no knowledge of a distinctive doctrine of Averroes, namely, his conception of the nature and the unity of the intellect *in potentia*, set forth, for instance, in his great commentary on *De anima*.[86] It was this doctrine that provoked the attack of Thomas Aquinas against the Latin Averroists. It seems to me to be inconceivable that Maimonides should have failed (as is the case) to mention, or to make an allusion to, this doctrine in the *Guide* if he had been aware of it when writing that work.

Nevertheless a comparison between these two philosophers may be instructive, though it will unavoidably entail some repetition. In part such a comparison must be a study in contrast; for the ideas of the two as to what is prudent and

84. See Moses ben Maimon, *Epistulae*, fasc. 1, ed. D. H. Baneth (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 70.
85. Passages of the *Guide* that may indicate that Maimonides did have some knowledge of Averroes' views or terminology are discussed below.
86. See n. 38 above.

what not in philosophic politics and what is desirable in theological exposition seem to be radically different. On the other hand Maimonides and Averroes were by and large contemporaries; and until the former left the Maghrib for Egypt they had lived under the rule of the same intolerant Moslem sect, the so-called Almohads, who enforced a variety of kalām as the official theology. Moreover, the philosophic background of Maimonides and Averroes was identical, being common to all the Aristotelians of the Spanish school. They had a rather similar naturalistic hard-headedness, and a similar suspicion of many of Avicenna's Neo-Platonic proclivities and probably also of his tendency to regard mystical experience as revelatory of the supreme plane of being. The juxtaposition of Maimonides and Averroes in a letter addressed to the former by his disciple Joseph ben Judah has considerable justification.

In view of the common culture and of the (at least to some extent) similar milieu in which they had been brought up, it could be expected – and the facts prove these expectations to be correct – that, in spite of the difference in religion and, consequently, in the conduct of life and in the attitude toward, and the possibilities of, practical activity, many of the problems with which Averroes and Maimonides were concerned would be identical; they were the problems that arose or for some reason acquired actuality and urgency in the philosophic debate of twelfth-century Spain. However, the *Guide* was written not in Spain or in the Maghrib, but in Egypt, after Maimonides had lived for many years in that country. At that time Egypt does not seem to have been an intellectual center comparable to Spain, yet it was not wholly negligible from that point of view, and, even more important, it was relatively near to, and in close connection with, the countries farther east up to and including Persia, where an intense speculative activity was going on and new ground was being broken, for instance by Suhrawardī Maqtūl, who was executed in 1191 under the authority of Maimonides' patron Saladin. There is some reason to believe that the Jews of these Eastern countries participated to some extent in these intellectual activities. Under these circumstances Maimonides' philosophic views and interests could very well have become modified under the impact of the new intellectual influences he could have encountered in Egypt. Yet this is not the case as can be shown, *inter alia*, by a comparison between him and Averroes. When at a mature age he wrote the *Guide*, he was, in the domain of philosophy and philosophic theology, still almost exclusively involved with the problems with which he must have been familiar in his youth in Spain and the Maghrib.

One of the problems that had come to a head in Spain and was accorded in their different ways considerable importance by both Maimonides and Averroes is, as has already been mentioned, the problem of the relation between the theory

of celestial physics and the dominant Ptolemaic system of astronomy. The difficulties to which, from the Aristotelian point of view, the Ptolemaic hypotheses of epicycles and eccentrics give rise have already been referred to.

It may have been Ibn Bājja who initiated this crisis of the sciences, which, as far as its acute phase goes, seems to have been confined to Moslem Spain and the Maghrib; or at least as the *Guide* (II 24) indicates he played a part in it by criticizing the use of the epicycles as incompatible with Aristotelian physics.[87] Ibn Ṭufayl seems to have been unable to accept either epicycles or eccentrics. Both are likewise reflected by Averroes,[88] who takes a very dim view of the astronomy of his own time, believes that a return to the forgotten astronomy of the pre-Aristotelian philosophers and of Aristotle himself was indicated, if only that doctrine could be reconstituted, and avows that in his youth he had the ambition, which he did not realize, to re-create that science and that in his old age he hopes that some young man will make this his task.

Maimonides' ostensible reaction to, and conclusions from, the discrepancy between physical and astronomical theory are quite different. He apparently wishes to utilize it in order to cast doubt on Aristotelian natural science. Yet obviously, like Averroes, and doubtless also Ibn Bājja, he attaches great importance to the point, not only because it provides him with a convenient weapon in his theological debate, but also because of the exigencies of scientific theory. Rather paradoxically, because all the Spanish Aristotelian philosophers concerned accepted unquestioningly the master's view of the radical difference between the heavens and the sublunar world, the aspiration for unified physical science (unified at least as far as method was concerned) was very much in evidence.

Maimonides' remarks in II 13 may be regarded as a case in point. Maimonides mentions there as a typical example of a satisfactory physical theory an explanation that holds at least in part the differences between the four sublunar elements to be a function of the distance of the natural places from the heavenly sphere. According to this view, matter situated near this sphere acquires because of this proximity the disposition needed for receiving the form of fire. And the same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the three other elements. Thus there is a unified (and therefore, from the methodological point of view, eminently acceptable) explanation of a great variety of sublunar phenomena; a fact that is used by Maimonides to point the contrast between the theory of terrestrial physics, which he regards

87. In II 9 Maimonides also mentions Ibn Bājja's opinion on the place of Venus and Mercury in the planetary system, but this point has no connection with the crisis of science referred to in the text. We know from a manuscript autobiographical letter addressed by Ibn Bājja to his friend Abū Jaʿfar Yūsuf (MS. Pococke 206, Bodleian Library, fol. 118b) that the Spanish philosopher fancied himself as an astronomer.

88. In his Great Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1948), III, 1163.

as true and proven, and Aristotle's largely unsatisfactory celestial physics, which held that, for no conceivable natural reason, the direction and the velocity of the motions of the various spheres differed. The conclusion apparently drawn by Maimonides is that we should be wary of accepting on the basis of this kind of physical theory such fundamental doctrines as the eternity of the world.

Does this mean that Maimonides was incurably skeptical about the possibility of working out a satisfactory comprehensive and unified physical theory in which the explanations of the celestial phenomena would be methodologically as valid as those of the sublunar phenomena? It is not easy to answer this question. Obviously, for his own purposes (at least for the purposes he had in mind in Part II)[89] Maimonides made capital out of the crisis of natural science due to the incompatibility of the Ptolemaic system with Aristotle's physics. He also pointed out quite correctly that it is much more difficult to obtain scientific data concerning the heavenly spheres than it is to obtain such data with regard to the sublunar world. It can even be maintained that the thoroughly skeptical position was, for the reasons he gave, the only consistent and logical one. Yet it seems to me that such agnosticism would stultify all that Maimonides set out to accomplish in the *Guide* and would also be quite irreconcilable with his general views, expressed in quite different contexts, on man's highest destination and man's knowledge.

At this point a few remarks on the role of physical theory as conceived in the Spanish philosophic school may be relevant. It was a very considerable role, a point of view that was in keeping with the spirit and early tradition of the Peripatetic school as exemplified by Aristotle himself and by Alexander of Aphrodisias. This evaluation of physical theory is in contrast with the opinion of the Greek Neo-Platonists, such as Proclus, in whose hierarchy of planes of being the corporeal world, which is the object of physics, occupies a lowly place, parallel to that of physical science regarded as inferior to metaphysics and mathematics.

For other reasons, this attitude of the Spanish philosophers, if we may call them so for the sake of convenience, differed from that of Avicenna. I do not of course wish to imply that Avicenna did not set great store by physical science: it was an indissoluble part of that complete system of knowledge which was philosophy. But there are degrees of interest. Avicenna introduced into that system his speculations concerning mystical experience and his investigation of self-awareness

89. It is not impossible that in this second part Maimonides gave a rather exaggerated expression to whatever qualms he may have had about the science of astronomy of his time. This overemphasis may be explained by his wishing to shake the confidence of a certain category of readers in the philosophic doctrine of the eternity of the world, a confidence that was certainly connected with belief in the trustworthiness of Greek science in general. In I 72, where he sums up the main points of physical science and astronomy, he seems to accept the Ptolemaic system and gives the reader no hint that he regards it as dubious.

and of the ego regarded as a central notion of psychology; and at least the second of these two lines of inquiry, neither of which is pursued either by Maimonides or by Averroes, seems to have been very much in the foreground of his thought. It is even more to the point that according to him,[90] the science of metaphysics or the "divine science" deals with several subjects. It is notably concerned with (1) knowledge of God and other incorporeal substances, and (2) knowledge of being and its various modes. This includes the knowledge of the difference between essence and existence and between necessary and contingent being, which, according to Avicenna, may without any recourse to natural science prove the existence of God.

In several important particulars the views of both Maimonides and Averroes on the status of physical theory and its relation with "divine science," i.e., metaphysics, stand in contrast to this attitude. They are similar, though by no means identical; some of the divergencies are due to the fact that, in contradistinction to Maimonides' general usage, Averroes did not hesitate to propound his own personal interpretation with regard to purely theoretical questions not connected with theological debates. Thus he considers[91] that the primary and main object of metaphysics is knowledge of the highest formal and final causes, i.e., in the final resort, of God (and the immaterial substances). Maimonides, on the other hand, in his early work on logic[92] – and there is no reason to think that he changed his position later on – states that the "divine science" has two main subjects: (1) God and the immaterial substances, and (2) general notions such as being.

He thus continues the tradition of Avicenna and also of al-Fārābī.[93] As we have seen, he also conforms to Avicenna's views on the relation between essence and existence. But he treats of this relation and, in general, of the second subject of metaphysics referred to above in so cursory a fashion that I believe we would not be far out in asserting that in fact, though not in theory, Averroes' definition would be adequate for the "divine science" as envisaged in the *Guide*.

Seen from this angle, metaphysics is closely connected with, and in a way

90. See the long discussion at the beginning of the section of *The Book of the Healing of the Soul* dealing with metaphysics, II, 2 ff. It may be added that, according to Avicenna, metaphysics is also concerned with the fundamental principles of each particular science; see S. Pines, Abstracta VI, *Revue des Études islamiques* (1938), pp. 51 f.

91. See Averroes, *Kitāb mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa* (Hyderabad, 1365 A.H.), pp. 4 f. Averroes polemizes (p. 5) against Avicenna's contention that the conclusions of physical science concerning the existence of immaterial principles are superfluous in metaphysics. The fact that according to Averroes the primary object of this science is as stated, does not prevent him from taking into consideration the circumstance that in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle deals also with other subjects (see pp. 5 f.).

92. *Kitāb fī ṣināʿat al-manṭiq*, better known under its Hebrew title *Millot-Hahhiggayon*, ed. and trans. by I. Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938), p. 61 of the Hebrew Section and p. 63 of the English translation.

93. See S. Pines's paper (p. 51) referred to in n. 90.

based on, physics, which it prolongs. This seems to be exactly Maimonides' conception of the connection between the two sciences, repeatedly alluded to in the *Guide*—sometimes with reference to the Hebrew expression *The Account of the Beginning* (or "physics" in Maimonides' interpretation) and *The Account of the Chariot* (or "metaphysics"; see I 17). This accounts *inter alia* for Maimonides' believing in the necessity of keeping secret from unqualified people the greater part of physical science (see *ibid.*): it has too close a bearing on metaphysics, which is the dangerous science par excellence.

On these points Averroes takes a comparable line, though he is, doubtless, more consistent than Maimonides. His proof, taken over from Aristotle, of the existence of the Prime Mover has as its starting point and primary datum the existence and nature of motion, i.e., it presupposes physical phenomena. In other words, God, the principal object of metaphysics, can be proved to exist only by a reference to physics.

According to Avicenna's conception, such a reference, though legitimate, is not indispensable; for God's existence may be demonstrated without straying beyond the bounds of metaphysics by showing that contingent being necessarily presupposes Necessary Being, both of which are purely metaphysical notions.

As has already been stated, Maimonides, at the time he wrote the *Guide*, may not have been conversant with, or influenced by, Averroes' attempt to disqualify these Avicennian concepts in the name of the pure unadulterated Aristotelian doctrine. Accordingly he freely uses in one of his proofs of the existence of God (II 1, third method) the term Necessary Being. It is all the more noteworthy and, as I believe, indicative of the underlying tendencies of his thought that neither this proof nor any of the others propounded by him can be considered purely metaphysical. As opposed to the Avicennian proof referred to above, all of them presuppose the existence of motion or of change, i.e., the existence of the cosmos, and are in this respect in accord with Averroes (and with Aristotle himself). It is by no means disconcerting to compare these arguments with Maimonides' assertion in I 70 that the motion of the heavenly sphere is the strongest proof of the existence of God. No radical change of position is involved, perhaps no change at all.

It may be added that the use by Maimonides in II 1 of Avicennian terminology may be appropriate or not in the context but does not appear to involve self-contradiction.

On another point, however, on which Averroes is opposed to Avicenna, the position of the former is maintained in two passages of the *Guide* and the latter's position in one. The question is: should God be equated with, or differentiated from, the separate intellect that moves the Supreme Sphere?

By distinguishing God, the Necessary Being, from this intellect Avicenna negated His having any definite physical function in the cosmos, whereas Averroes by his identification of the two clearly assigns God such a function: He is the first of the separate intellects, the last of which is the Active Intellect. All of these intellects except the last are prime movers of heavenly spheres.

The three relevant passages of the *Guide* read:

(I 72): "In the same way there exists in being something that rules it as a whole and puts into motion its first principal part granting it the power of putting into motion, in virtue of which this part governs the things that are other than itself."

(II 1): "It is necessary that the mover of the first sphere . . . should not at all be a body or a force in a body. . . . Now this is the deity."

(II 4): "It cannot be true that the intellect that moves the highest sphere should be identical with the necessary of existence."

It may be noted that the Avicennian point of view, which Maimonides professes to hold in II 4, is in keeping with the critique of natural science, which is one of the main themes of the first half of Part II. On the other hand, the Averroistic conception of I 72 and II 1 befits the wholesale acceptance of the main current doctrines of philosophic natural science characteristic of I 72.

The points at issue involve much more than the minutiae of scholastic discussions; in fact they concern the relation of God and the cosmos and concurrently of metaphysics and physics.[94] Averroes' view, which, as we have seen, seems to be maintained likewise by Maimonides at least in two passages, places God squarely

94. It may be argued that the contradiction between the passages of the *Guide* quoted above may be attenuated by a reference to the last part of I 72. Maimonides states there that the parallel he draws in the first part of the chapter between the relation that exists between the human organism and man's rational soul, on the one hand, and that which exists between the universe and God on the other, is not rigorously accurate, the reason being that he did not wish to baffle the ill-prepared reader. It would have been more correct to compare God's relation to the cosmos to that of the acquired intellect to man's organism. This assertion of Maimonides need not, however, mean that in the final analysis there is no similarity between the point of view he professes in I 72 and Avicenna's thesis. In point of fact it is as a separate intellect that Avicenna's God is (qua final cause) the mover of the highest sphere. Rather disconcertingly Maimonides seems to imply elsewhere that God's relation to the world is comparable to that of a soul to the living organism it animates. For no one as familiar with Aristotle as were Maimonides' fellow philosophers could disregard the associations evoked in a passage of *Guide* I 58 *in fine*, in which the relation of God to the world is compared to that of a captain to his ship. The allusion to *De anima* ii. 1. 413a 8–9 must have been unmistakable: for in that much quoted passage Aristotle refers to the possibility that the relation of the soul to the body could be regarded as comparable to that of a navigator to his ship. The apparent implications of these and perhaps also other passages of the *Guide* are most curious, not only because the view that God should be considered as the soul of the world is at variance with the philosophic doctrine, but also because this was the belief of the Sabians, i.e., the Pagans. Maimonides decries them because of their holding this belief, as it proves deficiency of philosophic knowledge.

within the system of the cosmos as its "principal part," a term borrowed by Maimonides from al-Fārābī. The domains of metaphysics and physics are thus brought very close together (whereas, as has already been stated, if Avicenna were to jettison the Aristotelian heritage, which sometimes hampered his personal philosophy, his metaphysics could, if this were required, altogether dispense with physical science).

Two important chapters of the *Guide* relevant to this problem have already been discussed. They are I 68 and I 54. The first of these suggests – if we follow up Maimonides' hints to their logical conclusion – that God may be identical with the system of sciences, including physical science. If this is so, this may imply a higher valuation of natural science than any that may be found in Averroes' works.

I 54 deals with the interpretation of Moses' two requests, of which only one is fulfilled: he is vouchsafed knowledge of the operations of God in nature. Maimonides speaks in that connection of the attributes of action, i.e., of the application to God of such names as the "merciful," "revengeful," and so forth. As has already been stated, the use of these attributes is due to an anthropomorphic interpretation of natural or historical events regarded as beneficent or untoward. Quite evidently, the man who is granted knowledge of God, for instance Moses, must go beyond these anthropomorphic descriptions and grasp the workings of natural order. The chapter appears to indicate that the only positive knowledge of God possible to man consists of his understanding the natural phenomena.

Now if the conclusions that have been drawn from I 68 are correct, this knowledge of the system of nature may represent the essence of God. This might be the explanation of the rather enigmatic text in III 52 according to which God apprehends us by the same light by which we apprehend Him. This may mean that, in accordance with the Aristotelian assumption of the unity of the subject and object of intellection, God is identical with the system of the natural sciences, and that man too may to some degree achieve this identity.

Other texts in the *Guide* tie up with this line of thought, notably parts of the parable of the castle in III 51. This parable refers *inter alia* to a category of people who go around the ruler's house looking for a gate, which they do not find. Maimonides tells us at first that these are the talmudic scholars who follow the authorities, but have no knowledge of theoretical speculation. Immediately afterwards, however, he offers another interpretation, which, as it seems to me, rather completes than contradicts the first one:

"Know, my son, that as long as you are engaged in studying the mathematical sciences and the art of logic, you are one of those who walk around the house searching for its gate. . . . If, however, you have understood the natural things,

you have entered the habitation and are walking in the antechambers. If, however, you have achieved perfection in the natural things and have understood the divine science, you have entered in the ruler's place *into the inner court* and are with him in one habitation. This is the rank of the men of science."

Thus knowledge of physics and metaphysics gives access to the castle, i.e., enables such men as are versed in these sciences to reach a state of nearness to God. It may be noted that apparently, at least as far as knowledge is concerned, no essential difference is supposed to exist between this state and that of the prophets. The latter are said to have a perfect knowledge of metaphysics and to direct all the activity of the intellect toward an examination of the existents with a view to drawing an inference from them to God and to understanding, as far as possible, His governance, i.e., with a view to obtaining the knowledge of natural phenomena granted to Moses (III 51).

I should add that the part of the parable referred to above seems to me to contain a key to Maimonides' intention (or one of his intentions) in writing the *Guide*. The fact is that the description of the people going round the house searching for a gate tallies exactly with that of Maimonides' pupil Joseph ben Judah, for whose benefit the *Guide* is supposed to have been written.[95] Like them he has knowledge of logic, mathematics, and Jewish law and tradition, but is ignorant of physics and metaphysics. If, as is stated and implied by Maimonides, the *Guide* was written for him and for people like him, its purpose must have been to give him and them access to the ruler's house; in other words, to turn them into complete philosophers having the requisite knowledge of physics and metaphysics.[96] The acquisition of this knowledge is, as we are told in another passage

95. Maimonides may have thought of him when using in the passage in III 51 the form of address: my son.

96. However, the *Guide* is quite evidently not a systematic presentation of philosophic doctrine. It is, in fact, in many ways the contrary of such an exposé. A reader endowed with all the qualities required by Maimonides could obtain from it no more than an inkling of physics and metaphysics. This was recognized by an early commentator on Maimonides, Shemtob Palquera, who in the *Book of the Seeker* (*Hammebaqqesh*) makes it clear that the study of the *Guide* is merely a preliminary to the systematic study of the philosophic sciences, and is borne out by the history of Jewish philosophy after Maimonides. We encounter the constant phenomenon that, while the *Guide* is used as the fundamental textbook, the actual doctrines discussed derive from Averroes, who serves as an indispensable supplement to the insufficient exposé of the *Guide*. If the *Guide* was intended to bring about by itself the required confirmation of philosophers *in potentia* into actual philosophers, it could not but fail in this task; whereas an adequate knowledge of philosophy could be acquired from the study of the works of Aristotle and his commentators and expositors. Evidently Maimonides could not be unaware of this fact. It may be supposed that in writing the *Guide* he intended to accomplish a twofold purpose: (1) to set his readers, at least those of them who had the necessary quality, upon the highroad leading toward philosophic knowledge; and (2) to prevent them from acquiring the indifference toward the specific form of Jewish law and tradition that could be considered the hallmark

of III 51, enjoined by religion. For the Torah commands us to love God, and love is proportionate to knowledge, it being impossible to love something one does not know.

The passage setting forth this idea is reminiscent of Avicenna's exposition of his conception of intellectual worship, but also of certain views of Averroes.

This last similarity may be partly explained by the fact that both Maimonides and Averroes were authorities on the religious law of their respective communities – it makes no odds in this connection that the former, as the author of *Mishneh Torah* and other halakhic works, was much more eminent in this respect than the latter, who was an accomplished qāḍī and wrote a number of legal treatises. They were rather exceptional in this respect; none of the outstanding Aristotelian philosophers who preceded them seem to have pursued this avocation. In contradistinction to their predecessors, they could not only discuss in an informed way the question whether the study of philosophy was permitted and, if this was the case, enjoined by Jewish or Islamic religious Law, but could also give an authoritative answer. The one given by Maimonides is, as we have seen, based on the commandment to love God. Averroes, for his part, had no difficulty in finding in the Koran suitable verses that could be interpreted as a divine command to study philosophy.[97]

Evidently both Maimonides' and Averroes' pronouncements on the religious duty of philosophizing were meant to normalize the philosopher's position in society, to show that he could be a regular and respectable member of the community. In the Islamic polity of the West this was at that time a much more difficult and, consequently, more needful task than it used to be, as Almohad rulers, whose subject Averroes was (and also Maimonides up to his departure for Egypt), had promulgated an official theology inspired by certain teaching of the kalām as well as an official policy of intolerance. As the attacks directed against Maimonides during his lifetime show, the Jewish notables of that period were

of the philosopher who, living as he does a theoretical life, is not concerned with the outward forms of legal and cultic observance or with popular religious beliefs. The second objective could only be legitimately achieved by according the political life a status it did not have in Ibn Bājja's philosophy, nor for that matter perhaps in Aristotle's. We shall see below what was Maimonides' theoretical justification for this evaluation. Maimonides' own activity perhaps illustrates the possibility of attaining both objectives and beyond them the practical and the theoretical goal for which they served as a preparation. But he was an exceptional person. It seems to me that none of his disciples and commentators had the same success in balancing the two objectives. In so far as they had a mind of their own, they were either out and out Aristotelians or Averroists in the Latin sense of the term, which has an antireligious connotation, or they were much more prepared than Maimonides to renounce scientific theory in favor of religious tradition.

97. See the translation of Averroes' "Decisive Treatise, Determining the Nature of the Connection between Religion and Philosophy," in G. F. Hourani's *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London, 1961), pp. 44 ff.

likewise very much aware of the danger of philosophy for religious belief. For that matter that danger was not minimized by either Maimonides or Averroes.

Hence the peculiar character of the religious commandment to study philosophy as envisaged by Maimonides and Averroes. In contradistinction to most other commandments, it was not addressed to all the members of the Jewish or Islamic religious community, but only to the few who were capable of grasping the philosophic doctrines. Those who were not were forbidden to have access to this kind of knowledge. The philosophers and would-be philosophers had moreover to be made aware that it was a part of the philosophic way of life to conform to, and uphold, the religious Law. We have noted that some passages of the *Guide* show traces of the influence of Ibn Bājja's conception of the philosopher as an isolated stranger in his own community. Theoretically this view need not conflict with those of Maimonides and Averroes; for the obligations imposed by the latter upon the philosopher to dissemble or at least to refrain from giving a public expression to his true opinions may be considered as leading to the philosopher's isolation.[98]

But owing to a change of emphasis, the prevailing attitude of these two authors appears to be wholly different. In the *Guide* and in the relevant writings of Averroes the solitude of the philosopher is much less in evidence than his faithful observance of the law of his religious community and the care he takes to avoid saying or doing anything that might dangerously weaken the hold of religious tradition upon the multitude.

Both of them posed the question of the necessity of teaching, and imposing upon, the common people obligatory religious beliefs, i.e., dogmas, which, without being philosophic, would not be compatible with simple, literal-minded, wholly unsophisticated faith.

The problem probably came to the fore because of the policy of the Almohads, who compelled all their subjects to profess an official theology. On this point the positions of Maimonides and Averroes differ. Maimonides had very strong convictions concerning the utility and even necessity of an official system of religious beliefs for the preservation of communal obedience to the law. What is more, he lived up to his convictions by formulating in his commentary on the Mishnah the thirteen principal dogmas of Judaism. Many of these dogmas run counter to philosophic truth. Nevertheless Maimonides did not accept the idea that

98. This attitude does not, at least as far as Averroes is concerned, interfere with the purely theoretical consideration of the possibility of desirable revolutionary changes in the constitution of society. In his *Paraphrase* of Plato's *Republic*, he regards it as not wholly impossible that, given a succession of enlightened rulers, the Moslem state of his time, i.e., the Almohad kingdom, could be transformed into Plato's ideal philosophic republic. There is no doubt that, in Averroes' opinion, such a development would have been most desirable. See S. Pines, "Notes on Averroes' Political Philosophy" (in Hebrew), *ʿIyyun* (1957), pp. 68 f. and 76.

the common folk should be permitted to hold on to the primitive belief. In fact he chose to take a leaf out of the Almohads' book and to make the belief (imposed by these Moslem rulers upon all their subjects)[99] in the noncorporeality of God obligatory for all members of the Jewish community.[100] Evidently this dogma could not but modify the simple faith of the ordinary people. It could be regarded as impelling them to take a first step, fraught with peril for their like, on the slippery road of religious speculation; the risk being the loss of faith and of the habit of obedience to religious Law.

It was a risk about which Averroes felt very strongly. He took the position that the simple faith of the average nonphilosophical person should not be troubled; he should be left free to stick to his own unsophisticated beliefs even in such matters as the corporeality of God. This does not mean that Averroes attributed an intrinsic value to naïve faith. He had the same kind of attitude toward saintly simplicity as Maimonides. Both of them believed that mankind is essentially divided into philosophers and the multitude of nonphilosophers. But Averroes insists,[101] perhaps more vehemently than Maimonides has ever done, upon the harmfulness of the third, apparently intermediate, category of semi-intellectuals, identified with the Mutakallimūn,[102] who are incapable of grasping the philosophic truths, but raise in public all kinds of theological questions and trouble the acquiescent faith of the ordinary folk. The proclamation of such dogmas as the incorporeality of God was probably regarded by Averroes as one of the ways in which they disturb the peace of the community. At any rate he saw no reason to impose the profession of this dogma upon the ordinary people.[103] We should remember that Averroes had more urgent grounds than Maimonides to adopt a hostile attitude toward the Mutakallimūn, who were the official theologians of the Almohad kingdom and in that capacity a source of danger for the philosophers.

99. On the probable relation between this policy of the Almohads and Maimonides' views, see I. Heinemann, "Maimuni und die arabischen Einheitslehrer," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, LXXIX (1935), 102–48.

100. The incorporeality of God is the third of the thirteen fundamental dogmas of Judaism formulated in Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin, Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, pp. 21 f.

101. On Averroes' attitude on this point, see L. Gauthier, *La théorie d'Ibn Rochd (Averroès) sur les rapports de la religion et de la philosophie* (Paris, 1909). See Averroes' *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla*, in *Falsafat Ibn Rushd* (Cairo, 1935), pp. 96 ff. It may be noted that Averroes speaks in the same context (p. 97) of the doubt and perplexity engendered in people belonging to this category (which is the category of the diseased, while both the men of knowledge and the common men are healthy), because of erroneous interpretations of scriptural texts. The term *ḥayra*, which has been translated as "perplexity," derives from the same root as the second word in the Arabic title of *The Guide of the Perplexed: Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*.

102. And the sufi mystics.

103. See *al-Kashf*, p. 91.

This prudent attitude of Averroes made him set considerable restrictions upon the allegorical interpretation of the scriptures. These restrictions are clearly inspired by political considerations, namely, the necessity not to undermine the religious foundations of society, but in his formulations he uses the legal concepts: lawful and prohibited. In one of his treatises dealing with the relation between religion and philosophy he makes the following promise:[104]

"From our account you have now become aware of the amount of error that occurs as a result of allegorical interpretation. It is our desire to have the chance to fulfill this aim with regard to all the statements of Scripture: i.e., to discuss which of them have to be interpreted allegorically and which not, and, when they have to be interpreted, to whom the interpretations should be given; I mean, (to deal thus) with every difficult passage in the Koran and the Traditions. . . ."

This project, which as far as is known was not carried out by Averroes, is much more cautious and limited in its scope than the program (whose conception and beginnings are recorded by Maimonides in his Introduction) of allegorical interpretation of the terms and parables found in the Bible and in later Jewish texts that is tackled with considerable daring in the *Guide*. Nevertheless there exists an unmistakable similarity between the two undertakings. There is no reason to assume that Averroes influenced Maimonides on this point (or vice versa). In all probability, each of them had had this idea independently of the other. They were contemporaries, and the state of their world, whether Jewish or Islamic, and the climate of opinion apparently suggested these tasks.

It should be noted that the way in which Maimonides carried out his project in the *Guide* quite evidently signifies that this work is centered upon the proposition that the prophets were philosophers. What Maimonides really thought about this is anybody's guess. But quite apart from such unprofitable conjectures, the proposition in question may, in view of the fact that it is not supported by any evidence whatever, be legitimately qualified as a "noble fiction," in the Platonic sense of the word. The fact that in the period after Maimonides Aristotelian philosophy could become an integral part of the way of life of the Jewish elite, or a considerable portion of it, is largely due to the acceptance of this fiction.

The Platonic political theory, as adopted by the Arabic and Jewish Aristotelian philosophers, takes as its starting point the division of mankind into three categories: (1) the actual, or (2) the potential philosophers, and (3) the nonphilosophers. The relevance of this qualification is due to the fact that a specific character of political action, at least of political action on the part of the philosopher, is that it is a mode of dealing (1) with the potential philosophers, who have to be

104. The following passage occurs in Averroes' *al-Kashf*. The translation used here is taken from G. F. Hourani's *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (p. 81).

recognized as such and turned into active philosophers, and (2) with the non-philosophers, who have to be kept in line, influenced for their own benefit and that of the philosophers, and, in the ideal case, ruled by the latter. Plato in many of his dialogues may be considered as applying himself to the first of these two tasks; and so did Maimonides in the *Guide*, whereas Aristotle and Averroes, who in most of their works relied to a much greater extent upon straightforward exposition and logical demonstration, have mainly in mind a reading public made up of actual philosophers, all the others being incapable of understanding their mode of reasoning.

In his great work, *Mishneh Torah*, which codifies the Jewish law and, in its first part, the *Book of Knowledge*, propounds a system of beliefs, Maimonides engaged, to the extent to which he considered it advisable, upon the second of the political tasks referred to above.

Maimonides did not only – contrary to, for instance, Ibn Bājja's practice and theory – undertake this kind of "political" activity; it also held a very high degree in his scale of values. This does not mean that he thought that a theoretical way of life was overappreciated by the philosophers. When all is said and done he, just like other Aristotelian philosophers, held this way of life to be the supreme achievement possible to man. But, perhaps rather paradoxically, in a way reminiscent of al-Fārābī,[105] he seems to have thought that this supreme attainment should be rounded off by being combined with practical activity. Accordingly he points to the example of the three Patriarchs and of Moses, who engaged in all kinds of mundane occupations. It is even more significant that he propounded a perhaps at least partly original theoretical legitimation for the activity of the legislator and the statesman by regarding it as a kind of imitation of God. (In this he possibly went beyond the Plato of the *Republic*, who required the philosopher to return to the "cave,"[106] but did not attempt to mitigate the regret that they must feel at being torn from the pure contemplation of the eternal truths and obliged to govern the polis.) As we already know, man's only positive knowledge of God consists, according to Maimonides, in his knowledge of the workings of nature or God, whose characteristic it is to ensure the preservation of the permanent features of the cosmic order. This includes *inter alia* the preservation of the various animal species and of mankind, but does not presuppose special care being taken of the average human (or of the animal) individual. It is because of this functioning of natural order that God is thought of as working judgment, righteousness, and loving-kindness.

105. Though the formulation is different, and though Maimonides may have had higher hopes than al-Fārābī as to what man can achieve in a theoretical life. See above.
106. Cf. Plato's *Republic*, 516C–517A, 519C, 520A.

As Maimonides points out in the last chapter of the *Guide* (III 54), man should endeavor to imitate Him in this respect. This statement has sometimes been interpreted as meaning that – in contradiction to the whole trend of his thought and to many definite assertions occurring in the *Guide* and even in the chapter in question – Maimonides at the end adopted the quasi-Kantian idea that the ordinary moral virtues and moral actions are of greater importance and value than the intellectual virtues and the theoretical way of life. It seems to me that a study of this last chapter and of the chapter preceding it (III 53 as well as of I 52) cannot but show that this explanation is completely false. As Maimonides explicitly states, man should imitate God in His attributes of action, i.e., as a reference to III 53 and I 52 proves, both in the bestowal of benefits and in bringing about calamities; the former and the latter are required for the preservation and functioning of the cosmic order.

A man engaged in the highest form of practical activity, that of the legislator and the statesman, should in his imitation of God be, according to the circumstances, either beneficent or cruel, not because he has the corresponding sentiments, but because these modes of action are necessary for his purpose, which consists in the creation and preservation of the highest possible type of community. In I 54 Maimonides adds the rider that, in point of fact, the ruler of a country should indulge more frequently in beneficent than in punitive action.

Such an imitation of God or of the order of nature is not only a moral imperative concerned with the present and the future. It may also be used to explain history, notably history made by men of a certain type, the great example being Moses.

We have seen that Maimonides has taken over from Alexander of Aphrodisias "wily graciousness" used with reference to the ingenious, sometimes apparently makeshift, contrivances with the help of which nature utilizes to the best effect the materials at hand and produces the self-perpetuating natural order, overcoming or bypassing the various impediments as well as the dangers that threaten the existence of every animal species. As has already been suggested, Moses' attitude toward, and use of, the historical circumstances in which he was placed was similar. In order to hammer into shape the religious and national community that he founded, he (or divine "wisdom" manifesting itself through his agency as well as through nature's) utilized various contrivances.

As far as legislation goes, Moses' task was twofold: (1) to institute laws and commandments different from, and better than, those that were in force at that time among the pagans of his part of the world; (2) to provide for certain continuity. Thus he could and did reform the religious laws dealing with sacrifices but he could not, in the face of the universal uses prevalent at that time, have abrogated sacrifices altogether.

By applying these considerations Maimonides accounts for a considerable portion of the Mosaic commandments. It may of course be argued that the notion of better commandments is not quite clear and unambiguous. However, at least once Maimonides introduces a more precise criterion: he asserts that the main purpose of the Mosaic legislation was to make the religious laws and cults less burdensome than they were among the pagans (III 47).

In this way Maimonides' defense of the law of the Torah does not (or does not altogether) rest upon the assumption that, absolutely speaking, it is the best conceivable law. His contention is that under the circumstances no better law could have been instituted (and that changing it would destroy the Jewish community). His apologetic purpose consequently involves him in a historical task, obliging him to give an account of ancient oriental paganism.

The Sabians

For this purpose he had at his disposal (III 29) the source he needed, the so-called *Nabatean Agriculture*, composed by Ibn Waḥshiyya in the tenth century, a work that purported to give an account of the religious tradition and practices of ancient Babylonia, the rebellion against which by Abraham marks the beginning of the distinctive Jewish faith. From the geographical point of view this was not the exact brand of paganism with which Moses was concerned, but by and large Maimonides seems to consider that those cults manifest the same general characteristics.

Now Ibn Waḥshiyya's claim to give an authentic description of the religion in which Abraham had been brought up, the so-called Sabianism, was false, but not implausible; in the nineteenth century it took in the competent orientalist Chwolsohn. There is no reason to think that Maimonides' regarding it as a genuine historical account is a piece of make-believe.

At all events this account, which he doubtless supplemented with the help of other sources mentioned by him in III 29, fitted in with his historical scheme. For it seemed to show that the paganism in question was essentially a hotchpotch of magical superstitions, the absurdity of the beliefs being paralleled by that of the religious rites and customs, described by Ibn Waḥshiyya as being practiced principally because they were supposed to be beneficial to agriculture.

Abraham's throwing off the yoke of superstitious belief and Moses' prohibition of magic clear the way for true scientific knowledge. If we can go by III 29, Maimonides also acquired, through reading Ibn Waḥshiyya, the conviction that in addition to the fact that the common people of the pagan society of the Sabians denied science because of their addiction to magic, this society produced no

philosopher having a true conception of the universe.[107] At least by implication this is an important point in his indictment of the Sabians, the assumption being that in other societies religion renders possible the appearance of this exceptional type of man.

In Arabic usage the appellation Sabians came to be applicable to all pagans; in particular, it served to translate the term Hellenes used by Christian writers to designate the adherents of the paganism prevalent in the Roman Empire in the first centuries of the Christian era. No example of this linguistic usage occurs in the *Guide*, but in one passage the Greeks and the Sabians are bracketed together for derogatory mention (see above).

On the other hand, Maimonides makes it clear in a commentary on a passage of Alexander of Aphrodisias (see above) that he realized that the ancient Greek way of life was more favorable to the development of philosophy than the prophetic religions of his own time.[108] This is a significant admission, as the fostering of knowledge is one of the two main tasks of the Torah. It should be noted that Maimonides' objection to paganism is not due to the latter's supposedly polytheistic doctrines. He has no doubt at all that all communities (except, perhaps, the savages of Africa and of the Far North; cf. III 51) believe in the existence of a supreme God.[109] The Torah's condemnation is not directed against the theory, but against the practice, namely, the cultic worship accorded to the intermediaries that exist between God and man. Evidently such worship does not imply a false belief; it is nevertheless harmful for practical political reasons.

The Kalām

If closely examined, the attitude of Maimonides toward the kalām may appear quite as intentionally ambiguous as his attitude toward Aristotelian philosophy. Indeed, given the antithetical relation between the two systems of thought, this was perhaps inevitable. Even the fact that he does not hesitate clearly to express the respect he feels for philosophy and the intellectual contempt with which the theological efforts of the Mutakallimūn inspire him, does not, while giving a useful pointer, prima facie permit us to disregard the essential equivocality of the relevant data. For it may be held – indeed this is the ostensible position of the *Guide* itself

107. Abraham was born in that society, but was not of it.

108. It is true that he affirmed that these sciences flourished among the Jews of antiquity (I 71). We have no means of knowing whether in Maimonides' view this statement of a widespread opinion is to be taken at its face value. He does not enlarge upon it. In particular, he does not indicate in what way the study of the sciences was fostered in Jewish antiquity.

109. See *Guide* I 56: the images worshipped by the idolators are symbols of entities that are intermediaries between us and God.

– that Maimonides, while refuting certain extreme teachings of the Mutakallimūn, saw eye to eye with them on the most decisive point of all, namely, the temporal creation of the world.

At all events he took pains to let his great powers of systematic exposition have full play in his summing-up of the main principles of the kalām.

We do not know what kalām treatises he used in his exposition of these "premises." It is a pretty safe assumption that generally he drew upon the same sources as Averroes, who also attempted to formulate some of the first principles of the Mutakallimūn,[110] though his account of the doctrines is conceived on a much less ambitious scale than Maimonides'. The works utilized by the latter, or some of them, may not have been preserved. But even if they are, it might be a difficult task to prove that he had made use of them, as the composition and the style of the exposition concerning kalām bear the unmistakable stamp of his literary personality. This does not in any way mean that he falsifies his sources. His exposé of the "premises" of the Mutakallimūn is verifiably accurate in its details as well as its main points. Nevertheless the importance and the emphasis given in it to the various propositions may not have been quite the same as those accorded to them in the kalām treatises he knew.

It should also be noted that Maimonides' "premises" of the Mutakallimūn, as well as his "premises" of the philosophers, are mainly, or indeed exclusively, concerned with physical science, if, in accordance with the medieval classification, the concept of this science is extended so as to include the psychology of perception. But whereas the propositions of the philosophers expound and account for the order and the causality of the cosmos, the principles of the Mutakallimūn, such as their atomism, the assumption that everything that can be imagined can happen, and so on, are meant to prove that no causality and no permanent order exist in the world; all events are determined directly, without the intervention of intermediate causes, by the will of God, which is not bound by any law. In other words, there is no cosmos and there is no nature, these two Greek notions being replaced by the concept of congeries of atoms, with atomic accidents inherent in them being created in every instant by arbitrary acts of divine volition.

This is an exact presentation of the peculiarity of the doctrines of the Mutakallimūn as they appeared to the philosophers; but as far as the fundamental notions of kalām physics are concerned, this exposition is perhaps a more coherent and articulate one than those usually achieved by these theologians, and the absence of any concept of cosmic order and natural causality is probably more in evidence in this exposition than it generally was in the run-of-the-mill kalām treatises. From Maimonides' point of view this slight shift of emphasis in his otherwise

110. To be precise, of the Ashᶜariyya, see *al-Kashf*, pp. 43 ff.

trustworthy account was, doubtless, justified, not only because, for didactic reasons, the opposition between the Aristotelian doctrine and that of the Mutakallimūn had to be made as pointed as possible, but also because of his conception of the origins and primary tasks of kalām. Maimonides unreservedly accepts al-Fārābī's view[111] that the unique function of kalām consists in the defense of religion, which means that it does not regard the grasp of theoretical truth as an end in itself. Maimonides' idea that the doctrine of the kalām was originally taken over by the Moslem Muʿtazilite or Ashʿarite theologians from Christian doctors, who wrote in Greek or in Syriac, may also derive from al-Fārābī. To a certain extent it seems to be historically correct, *inter alia* in its allusion to the influence of John Philoponus[112] (or John the Grammarian to give him his Arabic name; see I 71).

Thus this Christian commentator of Aristotle maintained – in accordance with the Peripatetic doctrine – that an actual infinite cannot exist, but drew from this proposition the un-Aristotelian inference that the world must have been created in time.[113] Both the proposition and the inference from it figure, quite correctly from the historical point of view, in Maimonides' exposition of the kalām doctrine (I 73 and I 74, fourth way); and the general idea may have been taken over from John Philoponus. But as the Mutakallimūn had to adapt these conceptions to the exigencies of their peculiar doctrine, the resemblance between their argumentation as given in the *Guide* and other texts and that of John Philoponus does not extend to particulars.[114]

The most outstanding Mutakallim of the period before Maimonides and perhaps of all time was al-Ghazālī, whose personality also had other facets: he was also a mystic and occasionally perhaps a philosopher; in fact he was accused by

111. Which does not seem to be wholly correct, especially with regard to the early period of Muʿtazilite kalām.

112. However al-Fārābī obviously could not have been guilty of the egregious anachronism committed by Maimonides, who regards not only John Philoponus (Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī in Arabic), but also al-Fārābī's younger contemporary, the Christian Arabic philosopher Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, as one of the ancestors of the kalām (I 71). This error, which makes evident a glaring lacuna in his knowledge of the history of philosophy, may, in the last analysis, be due to the fact that Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī copied out excerpts from at least one work of John Philoponus, the latter's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. These excerpts are marked *Yaḥyā*, a name borne by both of them, which may have led to some confusion; see S. Pines, in *Isis*, No. 137 (1953), p. 250. Ibn Bājja makes as grave a mistake as Maimonides, as he amalgamates the names: Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī and Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī (John Philoponus), which produces Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī al-Naḥwī (see MS. Pococke 206, Bodleian Library, fol. 56a).

113. See John Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 7 ff.

114. In a treatise by the Arabic tenth-century philosopher Abu'l-Khayr al-Ḥasan Ibn Suwār al-Baghdādī, a kalām proof for the temporal creation of the world is contrasted with, and declared inferior to, a proof set forth by John Philoponus. The treatise is edited by A. Badawi in *Neoplatonici apud Arabes* (Cairo, 1955), pp. 243–47.

Averroes of trying to be all things to all men. He exercised a dominant influence on the theology of the Almohads.

Al-Ghazālī, starting from kalām premises and often using stock kalām arguments, made a serious bid to challenge the intellectual supremacy of Aristotelian and more particularly Avicennian philosophy, to expose the inconsistency and inadequacy of this system of thought, and to make it clear which points of the doctrines of the philosophers were incompatible with Islam. He did this in a work entitled *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, a title traditionally translated: *The Destruction of the Philosophers*, though "Incoherence of the Philosophers," preferred by S. Van den Bergh, would be more accurate. This work provoked Averroes into writing a lengthy refutation: *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, *The Destruction of the Destruction*, or *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, which as well as al-Ghazālī's work had a considerable influence.

Al-Ghazālī differed from his predecessors among the Mutakallimūn by his thorough knowledge of Avicennian philosophy, of which he has written a lucid and very well-known exposition, *The Intentions of the Philosophers*, and by his recognition of the paramount importance of certain issues in the conflict between the kalām (or religion, as he saw it) and philosophy. In a way his lucidity is a match for Maimonides', though his point of view is entirely different. Hence the question whether Maimonides was acquainted with al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* presents considerable interest.

No absolutely certain answer can be given to it; however, the probabilities are that at the time of the writing of the *Guide* Maimonides had read the celebrated work. No philosopher who wished to keep abreast of the intellectual debate of this period could have afforded not to have done so; and such a lacuna in Maimonides' knowledge of Arabic theological literature would have been most uncharacteristic. We may accordingly entertain the supposition that the antithesis established by Maimonides between the God of religion who possesses a free will, in the exercise of which He is not bound to act in accordance with the order of nature, and the God of the Aristotelian philosophers, who is hamstrung by the immutability of this order, owes a great deal to al-Ghazālī.

This antithesis is indicated in a passage of the *Guide* that would not have been disowned by al-Ghazālī:

(II 22): "If, however, we believe that all this [i.e., the heavenly spheres and the universe in general] has been produced through the purpose of one who purposed, made, and particularized it – as His wisdom, which cannot be grasped, required – none of these questions affect us, whereas they do affect him who claims that all this has come about through necessity and not through the will of one who wills. This is an opinion that does not agree with the order of that which

exists, an opinion in favor of which no cause and no new persuasive proof have been brought forward. Withal very disgraceful conclusions would follow upon it. Namely, it would follow that the deity whom everyone who is intelligent recognizes to be perfect in every kind of perfection, could, as far as all the beings are concerned, produce nothing new in any of them; if He wished to lengthen a fly's wing or to shorten a worm's foot, He would not be able to do it."

In addition it may be noted that al-Ghazālī's conception of the nature of will is expressed in the following statement of the *Guide:*

(II 18): ". . . The true reality and the quiddity of will means: to will and not to will. . . . The fact that it [a being separate from matter] may wish one thing now and another thing tomorrow does not constitute a change in its essence and does not call for another cause."

The defense of this conception of the will, which is traditional in the kalām, is one of the main objects of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut.*

However, the probability that it is, at least in part, because of al-Ghazālī's apologetics that Maimonides realized the true issue between philosophy and religion, or religious Law, does not necessarily mean that in the final analysis he, like al-Ghazālī though for different reasons, chose religion. In *Guide* II 25 he states that he did make this choice, as he implies, by an act of will, seeing that human reason is not capable of demonstrating with regard to the crucial question of the eternity of the world the truth of either position.[115] As has already been indicated, Maimonides also does his best to make Aristotelianism appear vulnerable by picking holes in his physics, while the smoke screen of negative theology is supposed to put out of court any definitive statement about what God may not be – certain evident impossibilities excepted.

However, as has been suggested, negative theology may not hold up to close scrutiny: Maimonides makes it clear that God is an intellect, with which the human intellect has at least an analogy; and he also affirms (though, taken literally, this statement contradicts his doctrine of the divine attributes) that in God will follows wisdom (see II 18 and III 25). From al-Ghazālī's point of view the last statement is tantamount to a negation of the nature of will. Unless we suppose that Maimonides was, all unaware, floundering in a welter of inconsistencies and, quite inadvertently, contradicting himself on fundamental issues, it seems plausible to believe that, while for practical reasons, out of public spirit, Maimonides chose

115. It may be noted that, whereas in II 25 Maimonides makes the categorical assertion that belief in the eternity of the world destroys religion, he mentions in I 71 the possibility of asking whether prophecy can be true (or valid) if the world is eternal, but refrains from giving an answer, as the question should only be dealt with after prophecy has been studied. No definite conclusion can be drawn from this passage, but it tends to produce the impression that prophecy can be true (or valid) even if the world is eternal.

to aid and abet the faithful adherents of religion through the act of will referred to above, he belonged as far as his overriding intellectual convictions were concerned to the opposite camp.

Nevertheless he saw clearly (and correctly) that whereas the Aristotelian "divine science" could be accepted as far as its theory was concerned, Aristotelian physics was wide open to legitimate objections, some of which were even more fundamental than those concerned with the discrepancy between Peripatetic science and the Ptolemaic system. As has already been indicated, Aristotle grasps the world as a datum, as a given fact; contrary to such members of the Early Academy as Xenocrates, he did not try to derive every phenomenon in it from the first principles. Sometimes explicitly, and perhaps more often tacitly, he accepted apparently with equanimity the existence in the cosmos of a constituent element that was not amenable to such derivation, of something corresponding to Plato's "necessity" (the *anankē* of the *Timaeus*, 48A).

Maimonides attributes the existence of this residue of obdurate facts, which are irreducible to scientific explanation, to God's having willed them, which from the physical (though, as has been stated, not from the metaphysical) point of view is as satisfactory or as unsatisfactory an explanation as any other that reflects the inability of science to account for the universe being as it is. This explanation, moreover, has the advantage of being reassuring and politically useful.

For similar reasons Maimonides adapts for his own purposes the old kalām terms "Particularizer" (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) and "particularization" (*takhṣīṣ*), which do not seem to have an equivalent in Greek philosophic vocabulary. As Maimonides (perhaps following the Mutakallim Abū'l-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī Imām al-Ḥaramayn[116] as well as al-Ghazālī) correctly states in his account of the fifth kalām "way" of demonstrating the temporal creation of the world (I 74), the use of these terms by the Mutakallimūn is due to their conviction that there is no intrinsic reason why anything, from the world as a whole downwards, should exist at all, or exist in the way it does and with such attributes as it has. The fact that things do exist and that they are endowed with one particular set of characteristics must consequently be due to the action of a "Particularizer" who willed them the way they are.

These views of the Mutakallimūn are bound up with the negation of nature and natural causality, i.e., of the realm of mediate causes. They are therefore quite unacceptable to Maimonides, who not only affirms the validity of these Aristotelian concepts, which he sometimes designates by the inclusive term,

116. To whom Averroes refers when speaking of particularization (see *al-Kashf*, p. 60, cf. p. 55). This concept is referred to in Imām al-Ḥaramayn's lengthy work, *al-Irshād*, edited and translated by J. D. Luciani (Paris, 1938), pp. 16 f. of the Arabic section, pp. 36 f. of the French section.

"nature of existence," but also believes that, with regard to the sublunar world, physical science can up to a certain point give a rational causal explanation of the phenomena. But there does not exist a physical theory giving a satisfactory account of the celestial spheres and their motions, let alone of the causes that led to their being arranged and to their moving as they do; these are matters that may be beyond human ken. This deficiency of man's knowledge necessitates, according to *Guide* II 19 (cf. II 21), the introduction of the notion of a "Particularizer," who in His wisdom arranged the celestial (and also the sublunar) world the way it is. This view, as stated in the passages referred to, seems to be based either on a belief in the existence of an irreducible element of irrationality in nature or on disbelief in man's ability to work out a correct all-comprehensive system of celestial physics. On the first supposition, Maimonides' view of God as the "Particularizer" approximates Whitehead's description of God as "the Principle of Concretion" and "the ground for concrete reality." "God is the ultimate limitation, and His existence is the ultimate irrationality." Even Whitehead's choice of terms occasionally calls to mind the kalām or Maimonides: "Some particular *how* is necessary, some particularization in the *what* of matter of fact is necessary."[117] According to him it is because of this necessity that metaphysics requires God.

However, quite evidently, this view of God as the source of the irrational element in nature does not square with Maimonides' conception of God as the supreme intellect. There are thus serious reasons for preferring the second interpretation of Maimonides' recourse to the notion of the "Particularizer." If this interpretation is accepted, this notion would only mean that man's unavoidable ignorance is put to a good and pious use.

This second interpretation conforms to Averroes' utilization of the term "Particularizer" in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. The possibility that Maimonides may have been acquainted with, and influenced by, this work when writing the *Guide* should be taken into account. The passage in question reads:[118]

"For the particularization which the philosophers infer is different from that which the Ashᶜarites intend, for the Ashᶜarites understand by 'particularization' the distinguishing of one thing either from a similar one or from an opposite one without this being determined by any wisdom in the thing itself which makes it necessary to particularize one of the two opposite things. The philosophers, on the

117. See A. N. Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World* (Penguin Books, 1938), pp. 203, 208, 207.

118. S. Van den Bergh's translation of Averroes' *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (London, 1954), I, 248 f., has been used. But the terms "particularize" and "particularization" have been substituted for "differentiate" and "differentiation," used by Van den Bergh to render *khaṣṣaṣa* and *takhṣīṣ*. The passage that is quoted forms a part of Averroes' refutation of an argument occurring in al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* that makes use of the notion of "particularization."

other hand, understood here by the particularizing principle only that which is determined by the wisdom in the product itself, namely the final cause, for according to them there is no quantity or quality in any being that has not an end based on wisdom, an end which must either be a necessity in the nature of the act of this being or exist in it, based on the principle of superiority. For if, so the philosophers believe, there were in created things a quantity or quality not determined by wisdom, they would have attributed to the First Maker and Creator an attitude in relation to His work which may only be attributed to the artisans among His creatures, with the intention of blaming them."

AL-RĀZĪ

Maimonides does not cite the name of any Moslem Mutakallim.[119] In fact he only quotes in the *Guide* the name of one thinker of Moslem antecendents[120] of whom he clearly disapproves: Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 923 or 925 or 932). According to Maimonides' letter to Ibn Tibbon, he was only a physician. In fact, he is one of the greatest names in the history of medieval medicine; but in thus curtly dismissing his claim to be a philosopher, Maimonides does him less than justice. He was no Aristotelian it is true, but a Platonist; at least that is what he called himself, apparently principally because of his physical doctrine, which conforms to a conception of Platonism found in the Arabic doxographical tradition. He was not interested in Plato's conceptions of the ideal city. More than that, he was the proponent of a thesis that might have seriously challenged al-Fārābī's and Maimonides' political and sociological Platonism. Al-Rāzī believed in the radical intellectual equality of men. However, the derogatory remark that Maimonides makes in the *Guide* (III 12) concerning al-Rāzī does not refer to these views. Maimonides takes al-Rāzī to task because of his affirmation that there is more evil in the world than there is good. This statement, which is not known to us from other sources – the work of Al-Rāzī quoted in the *Guide* not having come down to us – might seem to express the views of an ascetic. But this description does not apply to al-Rāzī. Indeed, whereas Maimonides (to be accurate the Maimonides of the *Guide*, but not of *Mishneh Torah*) appears to disapprove even of moderate bodily pleasure, al-Rāzī, while recommending temperance, is opposed to asceticism. Nevertheless the view that evil is dominant in the world is in keeping with al-Rāzī's teaching. For he believed that the existence of the world is an unfortunate accident brought about by the desire for conjunction with Matter conceived by the ignorant Soul –

119. He does name Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī as one of the forerunners of the kalām, but as we have seen, this is a mistake on his part on two counts: chronologically Yaḥyā could not have been a forerunner of the kalām; he considered himself to be a good Aristotelian.

120. He cannot be called a Moslem, being violently opposed to all religions.

the Soul and Matter being two of the five Eternal Beings postulated by the gnostic doctrine he adopted. This conjunction will be dissolved, and the world come to an end, after the Soul has acquired the requisite knowledge. As against this doctrine, Maimonides, in spite of his view of matter as a hindrance to human perfection, considers, in common with all Aristotelians, that, taken as a whole, the world is essentially good. The evils found in it loom so large only because men tend to take a quite unjustifiable anthropocentric view. They shrink to their proper insignificant dimensions if one considers the universe as a whole, in which mankind has a very unimportant role (III 12).[121]

Maimonides also cites some Arabic scientists as distinct from the philosophers: al-Qabīsī (II 24), who wrote a book on the distances between the heavenly spheres; Jābir Ibn Aflaḥ (II 9), a twelfth-century Spanish astronomer who differed from Ptolemy with regard to the question whether Venus and Mercury are above or below the sun; Thābit Ibn Qurra (II 24, III 14), a famous astronomer and mathematician; the Banū Shākir (I 73), authors of a book concerning mechanical devices. Quite evidently he had a knowledge of scientific literature that would have been regarded as adequate in the philosophic circles of his time.

The Jewish Authors

Maimonides' references, or allusions, to Jewish philosophic or kalām texts are exceedingly and rather surprisingly scanty. Maimonides' marked disinterest in this literature is in striking contrast to his attitude toward the Bible, the Talmud, the Midrashim, and kindred texts, which are quoted by him with great frequency, and also to his habit of citing Onqelos' Aramaic translation of the Torah, whose unsophisticated[122] avoidance of anthropomorphic expressions was apparently regarded by Maimonides as providing the unphilosophic majority with an acceptable mode of belief. No allusion to Isaac Israeli or Joseph Haṣṣadiq, the two Jewish philosophers mentioned in the letter to Ibn Tibbon, seems to occur in the *Guide*.

The only two passages that explicitly mention post-talmudic speculative opinions held among Jews refer to the Gaonim, i.e., the heads of certain talmudic academies in Iraq.

Saadia Gaon (d. 942) is perhaps one of those alluded to in a passage in I 71 referring to Gaonim (and Qaraites) who adopted Muʿtazilite ideas on the unity of God.

121. In III 25 Maimonides, speaking of the final end of the universe and rebutting the anthropomorphic illusions to which men are prone, states that the primary purpose is to bring into existence everything that is capable of existence. For being is a good. This is a formulation of the "principle of plenitude," whose history is traced in A. O. Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being* (New York, 1960 ed.); a definition of this principle is to be found on p. 52.

122. At least unsophisticated by the standards of medieval Aristotelians.

According to III 17, certain Gaonim believed (likewise in accordance with Mu'tazilite ideas) that in the afterlife animals will receive a compensation for the sufferings they endure in this life.

There is some reason to presume that a passage of *Guide* I 46 may have been, at least in part, meant to serve as a sort of counterblast to a parable in the *Kuzari* of Judah Hallevi (d. about 1141), a book that Maimonides probably knew. Judah Hallevi's parable (*Kuzari* I 19–22) indicates that the fact that information has been received that justice and fair-dealing are practiced in India should not be considered as proof that the country is ruled by a just king, whereas the arrival of envoys bearing gifts sent by the king of India would prove the existence of that king. In other words, the existence of God should be proved not by a reference to cosmic order, but by the fact of divine intervention in the history of the people of Israel and by the mission of the prophets.

The parable used by Maimonides in I 46 resembles that of Judah Hallevi, though it is perhaps a little more elaborately worked out, but his conclusion is different. According to the *Guide* one may be persuaded in various ways that a certain country has a king: one may see him in person, or see the retinue surrounding him, or one may consider that he exists because things are done (for instance, buildings and bridges are built) upon his order. One may also infer his existence from the fact that a robust beggar does not attack and rob a wealthy moneychanger, even if the latter is physically quite weak. This signifies that, contrary to Judah Hallevi, Maimonides believes that the fact of cosmic order should be used to prove the existence of God.

Maimonides often does not explicitly mention the sources he utilized in his allegorical interpretation of biblical terms and expressions. It seems probable that for this purpose he made frequent use of Jewish philosophic texts.[123] However, the matter requires further study.

The fact that, relatively speaking, Maimonides had so little recourse to Jewish philosophic literature is significant. It implies *inter alia* that he had no use for a specific Jewish philosophic tradition. In spite of the convenient fiction, which he repeats, that the philosophic sciences flourished among the Jews of antiquity, he

123. It may be mentioned that Maimonides' remark in III 8 concerning the absence in the Hebrew language of terms connected with sexual acts may derive from a similar observation made by the eclectic philosopher and Hebrew poet Moses Ibn Ezra; see S. Pines, *Tarbiz* (January 1958), p. 218, n. 2. There is a marked similarity between Maimonides' analysis of the various meanings of the Hebrew word *Elohim* (I 2) and that of another Jewish philosopher of Spain, Abraham Ibn Da'ūd, born in 1110, twenty-five years before Maimonides; see his philosophic treatise *Emunah Ramah*, ed. S. Weil (Frankfurt am Main, 1852), p. 83 of the Hebrew text. In *Guide* I 43 Maimonides refers, concerning a point of the Hebrew language, to the eleventh-century grammarian Abū'l-Walīd Marwān Ibn Janāḥ.

evidently considered that philosophy transcended religious or national distinction. Qua philosopher he had the possibility to consider Judaism from the outside. From this vantage point he could discover the justification that, if one takes into account human nature and condition, can be adduced for accepting the obligations of a strict member of the Jewish community and could apprehend and try to eliminate or to mitigate the dangers inherent in philosophic truth and trace the task of the philosophers-statesmen, one of whom he was.

Shlomo Pines

THE FIRST PART

of

The Guide of the Perplexed

*

My knowledge goes forth to point out the way,

To pave straight its road.

Lo, everyone who goes astray in the field of Torah,

Come and follow its path.

The unclean and the fool shall not pass over it;

It shall be called Way of Holiness.[1]

1. Cf. Isa. 35:8.

In the name of the Lord, God of the World[1]

[EPISTLE DEDICATORY]

My honored pupil *Rabbi Joseph,*[2] *may the Rock guard you, son of Rabbi Judah, may his repose be in Paradise.* When you came to me, having conceived the intention of journeying from the country farthest away in order to read texts under my guidance, I had a high opinion of you because of your strong desire for inquiry and because of what I had observed in your poems of your powerful longing for speculative matters. This was the case since your letters and compositions in rhymed prose came to me from Alexandria, before your grasp was put to the test. I said however: perhaps his longing is stronger than his grasp. When thereupon you read under my guidance texts dealing with the science of astronomy and prior to that texts dealing with mathematics, which is necessary as an introduction to astronomy, my joy in you increased because of the excellence of your mind and the quickness of your grasp. I saw that your longing for mathematics was great, and hence I let you train yourself in that science, knowing where you would end. When thereupon you read under my guidance texts dealing with the art of logic, my hopes fastened upon you, and I saw that you are one worthy to have the secrets of the prophetic books revealed to you so that you would consider in them that which perfect men ought to consider. Thereupon I began to let you see certain flashes and to give you certain indications. Then I saw that you demanded of me additional knowledge | and asked me to make clear to you certain things pertaining to divine matters, to inform you

1. Gen. 21 : 33. The correct sense of this Hebrew invocation is " God of Eternity." However, in current Hebrew the words mean " God of the World "; this seems to have been the meaning that Maimonides had in mind.
2. As Maimonides states in this Epistle, the *Guide* was written for the benefit of this disciple and for those like him. For this reason, some importance should be attached to the description, given in the text, of the intellectual attainment of Joseph, son of Judah.

of the intentions of the Mutakallimūn in this respect, and to let you know whether their methods were demonstrative and, if not, to what art they belonged. As I also saw, you had already acquired some smattering of this subject from people other than myself; you were perplexed, as stupefaction had come over you; your noble soul demanded of you to *find out acceptable words*.[3] Yet I did not cease dissuading you from this and enjoining upon you to approach matters in an orderly manner. My purpose in this was that the truth should be established in your mind according to the proper methods and that certainty should not come to you by accident. Whenever during your association with me a [biblical] *verse* or some text of the *Sages* was mentioned in which there was a pointer to some strange notion, I did not refrain from explaining it to you. Then when God decreed our separation and you betook yourself elsewhere, these meetings aroused in me a resolution that had slackened. Your absence moved me to compose this Treatise, which I have composed for you and for those like you, however few they are. I have set it down in dispersed chapters. All of them that are written down will reach you where you are, one after the other. Be in good health.

3. Eccles. 12 : 10.

[INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST PART]

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk,
For unto Thee have I lifted my soul.[1]

Unto you, O men, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of men.[2]

Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
And apply thy heart unto my knowledge.[3]

The first purpose of this Treatise is to explain the meanings of certain terms occurring in books of prophecy. Some of these terms are equivocal; hence the ignorant attribute to them only one or some of the meanings in which the term in question is used. Others are derivative terms; hence they attribute to them only the original meaning from which the other meaning is derived. Others | are amphibolous terms, so that at times they are believed to be univocal and at other times equivocal. It is not the purpose of this Treatise to make its totality understandable to the vulgar or to beginners in speculation, nor to teach those who have not engaged in any study other than the science of the Law – I mean the legalistic study of the Law. For the purpose of this Treatise and of all those like it is the science of Law in its true sense. Or rather its purpose is to give indications to a religious man for whom the validity of our Law has become established in his soul and has become actual in his belief – such a man being perfect in his religion and character, and having studied the sciences of the philosophers and come to know what they signify. The human intellect having drawn him on and led him to dwell within its province, he must have felt distressed by the externals of the Law and by the meanings of the above-mentioned equivocal, derivative, or amphibolous terms, as he continued to understand them by himself or was made to understand them by others. Hence he would remain in a state of perplexity and confusion as to whether he should follow his intellect, renounce what he knew concerning the terms in question, and consequently consider that he has renounced the foundations of the Law. Or he should hold fast to his understanding of these terms and not

1. Ps. 143:8. 2. Prov. 8:4. 3. Prov. 22:17.

let himself be drawn on together with his intellect, rather turning his back on it and moving away from it, while at the same time perceiving that he had brought loss to himself and harm to his religion. He would be left with those imaginary beliefs to which he owes his fear and difficulty and would not cease to suffer from heartache and great perplexity.

This Treatise also has a second purpose: namely, the explanation of very obscure parables occurring in the books of the prophets, but not explicitly identified there as such. Hence an ignorant or heedless individual might think that they possess only an external sense, but no internal one. However, even when one who truly possesses knowledge considers these parables and interprets them according to their external meaning, he too is overtaken by | great perplexity. But if we explain these parables to him or if we draw his attention to their being parables, he will take the right road and be delivered from this perplexity. That is why I have called this Treatise "The Guide of the Perplexed."

I do not say that this Treatise will remove all difficulties for those who understand it. I do, however, say that it will remove most of the difficulties, and those of the greatest moment. A sensible man thus should not demand of me or hope that when we mention a subject, we shall make a complete exposition of it, or that when we engage in the explanation of the meaning of one of the parables, we shall set forth exhaustively all that is expressed in that parable. An intelligent man would be unable to do so even by speaking directly to an interlocutor. How then could he put it down in writing without becoming a butt for every ignoramus who, thinking that he has the necessary knowledge, would let fly at him the shafts of his ignorance? We have already explained in our legal compilations some general propositions concerning this subject and have drawn attention to many themes. Thus we have mentioned there that the *Account of the Beginning*[4] is identical with natural science, and the *Account of the Chariot*[5] with divine science; and have explained the rabbinic saying: *The Account of the Chariot ought not to be taught even to one man, except if he be wise and able to understand by himself, in which case only the chapter headings may be transmitted to him.*[6] Hence you should not ask of me here anything beyond *the chapter headings*. And even those are not set down in order or arranged in coherent fashion in this Treatise, but rather are scattered and entangled with other subjects that are to be clarified. For my purpose is that the truths be glimpsed and

4. *maʿaseh bereshith*. Literally: *the Work of the Beginning*.
5. *maʿaseh merkabah*. Literally: *the Work of the Chariot*.
6. Babylonian Talmud (hereafter cited as B.T.), Ḥagigah, 11b, 13a.

then again be concealed, so as not to oppose that divine purpose which one cannot possibly oppose and which has concealed from the vulgar among the people those truths especially requisite for His apprehension. As He has said: *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*[7] Know that with regard to natural matters as well, | it is impossible to give a clear exposition when teaching some of their principles as they are. For you know the saying of [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed: The Account of the Beginning ought not to be taught in the presence of two men.*[8] Now if someone explained all those matters in a book, he in effect would be *teaching* them to thousands of men. Hence these matters too occur in parables in the books of prophecy. The *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* following the trail of these books, likewise have spoken of them in riddles and parables, for there is a close connection between these matters and the divine science, and they too are secrets of that divine science.

You should not think that these great *secrets* are fully and completely known to anyone among us. They are not. But sometimes truth flashes out to us so that we think that it is day, and then matter and habit in their various forms conceal it so that we find ourselves again in an obscure night, almost as we were at first. We are like someone in a very dark night over whom lightning flashes time and time again. Among us there is one[9] for whom the lightning flashes time and time again, so that he is always, as it were, in unceasing light. Thus night appears to him as day. That is the degree of the great one among the prophets, to whom it was said: *But as for thee, stand thou here by Me,*[10] and of whom it was said: *that the skin of his face sent forth beams, and so on.*[11] Among them there is one to whom the lightning flashes only once in the whole of his night; that is the rank of those of whom it is said: *they prophesied, but they did so no more.*[12] There are others between whose lightning flashes there are greater or shorter intervals. Thereafter comes he who does not attain a degree in which his darkness is illumined by any lightning flash. It is illumined, however, by a polished body or something of that kind, stones or something else that give light in the darkness of the night. And even this small light that shines over us is not always there, but flashes and is hidden again, as if it were the *flaming sword which turned every way.*[13] | It is in accord with these states that the degrees of the perfect vary. As for those who never even once see a light, but grope about in their night, of them it is said: *They know not, neither do*

7. Ps. 25:14. 8. B.T., Ḥagigah, 11b. 9. Or: there are those.
10. Deut. 5:28. 11. Exod. 34:29. 12. Num. 11:25. 13. Gen. 3:24.

they understand; They go about in darkness.[14] The truth, in spite of the strength of its manifestation, is entirely hidden from them, as is said of them: *And now men see not the light which is bright in the skies.*[15] They are the vulgar among the people. There is then no occasion to mention them here in this Treatise.

Know that whenever one of the perfect wishes to mention, either orally or in writing, something that he understands of these *secrets*, according to the degree of his perfection, he is unable to explain with complete clarity and coherence even the portion that he has apprehended, as he could do with the other sciences whose teaching is generally recognized. Rather there will befall him when teaching another that which he had undergone when learning himself. I mean to say that the subject matter will appear, flash, and then be hidden again, as though this were the nature of this subject matter, be there much or little of it. For this reason, all the Sages possessing knowledge of God the Lord,[16] knowers of the truth, when they aimed at teaching something of this subject matter, spoke of it only in parables and riddles. They even multiplied the parables and made them different in species and even in genus. In most cases the subject to be explained was placed in the beginning or in the middle or at the end of the parable; this happened where a parable appropriate for the intended subject from start to finish could not be found. Sometimes the subject intended to be taught to him who was to be instructed was divided—although it was one and the same subject—among many parables remote from one another. Even more obscure is the case of one and the same parable corresponding to several subjects, its beginning fitting one subject and its ending another. Sometimes the whole is a parable | referring to two cognate subjects within the particular species of science in question. The situation is such that the exposition of one who wishes to teach without recourse to parables and riddles is so obscure and brief as to make obscurity and brevity serve in place of parables and riddles. The men of knowledge and the sages[17] are drawn, as it were, toward this purpose by the divine will just as they are drawn by their natural circumstances. Do you not see the following fact? God, may His mention be exalted, wished[18] us to be perfected and the state of our societies to be improved by His laws regarding actions. Now this can come

14. Ps. 82:5. 15. Job 37:21.
16. In the context this appears to be the meaning of the two adjectives *al-ilāhī* and *al-rabbānī*; the literal meaning of the former is "divine"; the latter is derived from *rabb* signifying "the Lord."
17. *al-ḥukamā'*. The term often designates the philosophers.
18. In the text: God . . . when He wished. The sentence that follows is anacoluthic.

about only after the adoption of intellectual beliefs, the first of which being His apprehension, may He be exalted, according to our capacity. This, in its turn, cannot come about except through divine science, and this divine science cannot become actual except after a study of natural science. This is so since natural science borders on divine science, and its study precedes that of divine science in time as has been made clear to whoever has engaged in speculation on these matters. Hence God, may He be exalted, caused His book to open with the *Account of the Beginning*, which, as we have made clear, is natural science. And because of the greatness and importance of the subject and because our capacity falls short of apprehending the greatest of subjects as it really is, we are told[19] about those profound matters—which divine wisdom has deemed necessary to convey to us—in parables and riddles and in very obscure words. As [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, have said: *It is impossible to tell mortals*[20] *of the power of the Account of the Beginning. For this reason Scripture tells you obscurely: In the beginning God created, and so on.*[21] They thus have drawn your attention to the fact that the above-mentioned subjects are *obscure*. You likewise know *Solomon's* saying: *That which was is far off, and exceeding deep; who can find it out?*[22] That which is said about all this is in equivocal terms so that the multitude might comprehend them in accord with the capacity of their understanding | and the weakness of their representation, whereas the perfect man, who is already informed, will comprehend them otherwise.

We had promised in the Commentary on the *Mishnah* that we would explain strange subjects in the "Book of Prophecy" and in the "Book of Correspondence"—the latter being a book in which we promised to explain all the difficult passages in the *Midrashim*[23] where the external sense manifestly contradicts the truth and departs from the intelligible. They are all parables. However, when, many years ago, we began these books and composed a part of them, our beginning to explain matters in this way did not commend itself to us. For we saw that if we should adhere to parables and to concealment of what ought to be concealed, we would not be deviating from the primary purpose. We would, as it were, have replaced one individual by another of the same species. If, on the other hand, we explained what ought to be explained, it would be unsuitable for the vulgar among the people. Now it was to the vulgar that we wanted to explain the import

19. *khūṭibnā*. The Arabic word for rhetoric derives from the same verbal form of the root in question.
20. Literally: *flesh and blood*. 21. Cf. Midrash Shnei Ketubim, Batei Midrashoth, IV.
22. Eccles. 7:24. 23. Maimonides uses here and subsequently the term *drashoth*.

of the *Midrashim* and the external meanings of prophecy. We also saw that if an ignoramus among the multitude of Rabbanites should engage in speculation on these *Midrashim*, he would find nothing difficult in them, inasmuch as a rash fool, devoid of any knowledge of the nature of being, does not find impossibilities hard to accept. If, however, a perfect man of virtue should engage in speculation on them, he cannot escape one of two courses: either he can take the speeches in question in their external sense and, in so doing, think ill of their author and regard him as an ignoramus — in this there is nothing that would upset the foundations of belief; or he can attribute to them an inner meaning, thereby extricating himself from his predicament and being able to think well of the author whether or not the inner meaning of the saying is clear to him. With regard to the meaning of prophecy, the exposition of its various degrees, and the elucidation of the parables occurring in the prophetic books, another manner of explanation is used in this Treatise. In view of these considerations, we have given up composing these two | books in the way in which they were begun. We have confined ourselves to mentioning briefly the foundations of belief and general truths, while dropping hints that approach a clear exposition, just as we have set them forth in the great legal compilation, *Mishneh Torah*.

My speech in the present Treatise is directed, as I have mentioned, to one who has philosophized[24] and has knowledge of the true sciences,[25] but believes at the same time in the matters pertaining to the Law and is perplexed as to their meaning because of the uncertain terms and the parables. We shall include in this Treatise some chapters in which there will be no mention of an equivocal term. Such a chapter will be preparatory for another, or it will hint at one of the meanings of an equivocal term that I might not wish to mention explicitly in that place, or it will explain one of the parables or hint at the fact that a certain story is a parable. Such a chapter may contain strange matters regarding which the contrary of the truth sometimes is believed, either because of the equivocality of the terms or because a parable is taken for the thing being represented or vice versa.

As I have mentioned parables, we shall make the following introductory remarks: Know that the key to the understanding of all that the prophets, peace be on them, have said, and to the knowledge of its truth, is an understanding of the parables, of their import, and of the meaning of the words

24. Or: has become a philosopher.
25. Translated in accordance with the Ibn Tibbon Hebrew translation, which supposes a very slight graphical alteration of the Arabic text as we have it. The Arabic text could be rendered: and really have knowledge of the sciences. But the sentence is awkward.

occurring in them. You know what God, may He be exalted, has said: *And by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes.*[26] And you know that He has said: *Put forth a riddle and speak a parable.*[27] You know too that because of the frequent use prophets make of parables, the prophet has said: *They say of me: Is he not a maker of parables?*[28] You know how *Solomon* began his book: *To understand a proverb, and a figure; The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*[29] And it said in the *Midrash:* | *To what were the words of the Torah to be compared before the advent of Solomon? To a well the waters of which are at a great depth and cool, yet no man could drink of them. Now what did one clever man do? He joined cord with cord and rope with rope and drew them up and drank. Thus did Solomon say one parable after another and speak one word after another until he understood the meaning of the words of the Torah.*[30] That is literally what they say. I do not think that anyone possessing an unimpaired capacity imagines that the *words of the Torah* referred to here that one contrives to understand through understanding the meaning of parables are ordinances concerning the building of *tabernacles*, the *lulab*, and the *law of four trustees*. Rather what this text has in view here is, without any doubt, the understanding of obscure matters. About this it has been said: *Our Rabbis say: A man who loses a sela*[31] *or a pearl in his house can find the pearl by lighting a taper worth an issar.*[32] *In the same way this parable in itself is worth nothing, but by means of it you can understand the words of the Torah.*[33] This too is literally what they say. Now consider the explicit affirmation of [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, that the internal meaning of the *words of the Torah* is a *pearl* whereas the external meaning of all parables *is* worth *nothing*, and their comparison of the concealment of a subject by its parable's external meaning to a man who let drop a pearl in his house, which was dark and full of furniture. Now this pearl is there, but he does not see it and does not know where it is. It is as though it were no longer in his possession, as it is impossible for him to derive any benefit from it until, as has been mentioned, he lights a lamp—an act to which an understanding of the meaning of the parable corresponds. The Sage has said: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings* [*maskiyyoth*] *of silver.*[34] Hear now an elucidation of the thought that he has set forth. The term *maskiyyoth* denotes filigree traceries; I mean to say traceries in which there are apertures with very small

26. Hos. 12:11. 27. Ezek. 17:2. 28. Ezek. 21:5. 29. Prov. 1:6.
30. Cf. Midrash on the Song of Songs, 1:1. 31. A silver coin.
32. A coin; ninety-six *issar* were worth a *sela*ᶜ.
33. Cf. Midrash on the Song of Songs, 1:1. 34. Prov. 25:11.

eyelets, like the handiwork | of silversmiths. They are so called because a glance penetrates through them; for in the [Aramaic] *translation* of the Bible the Hebrew term *va-yashqeph* – meaning, he glanced – is translated *va-istekhe*.[35] The Sage accordingly said that a saying uttered with a view to two meanings is like an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. Now see how marvellously this dictum describes a well-constructed parable. For he says that in a saying that has two meanings – he means an external and an internal one – the external meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning, as happens in the case of an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. When looked at from a distance or with imperfect attention, it is deemed to be an apple of silver; but when a keen-sighted observer looks at it with full attention, its interior becomes clear to him and he knows that it is of gold. The parables of the prophets, peace be on them, are similar. Their external meaning contains wisdom that is useful in many respects, among which is the welfare of human societies,[36] as is shown by the external meaning of *Proverbs* and of similar sayings. Their internal meaning, on the other hand, contains wisdom that is useful for beliefs concerned with the truth as it is.

Know that the prophetic parables are of two kinds. In some of these parables each word has a meaning, while in others the parable as a whole indicates the whole of the intended meaning. In such a parable very many words are to be found, not every one of which adds something to the intended meaning. They serve rather to embellish the parable | and to render it more coherent or to conceal further the intended meaning; hence the speech proceeds in such a way as to accord with everything required by the parable's external meaning. Understand this well.

An example of the first kind of prophetic parable is the following text: *And behold a ladder set up on the earth, and so on.*[37] In this text, the word *ladder* indicates one subject; the words *set up on the earth* indicate a second subject; the words *and the top of it reached to heaven* indicate a third subject; the words *and behold the angels of God* indicate a fourth subject; the word

35. A verbal form deriving from the same root as the word *maskiyyoth*. Gen. 26:8.
36. Literally: the weal of the circumstances of the human societies.
37. Gen. 28:12–13. After the word *earth*, the verses read: *and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it.*

ascending indicates a fifth subject; the words *and descending* indicate a sixth subject; and the words *And behold the Lord stood above it* indicate a seventh subject. Thus every word occurring in this parable refers to an additional subject in the complex of subjects represented by the parable as a whole.

An example of the second kind of prophetic parable is the following text: *For at the window of my house I looked forth through my lattice; And I beheld among the thoughtless ones, I discerned among the youths, A young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner, And he went the way to her house; In the twilight, in the evening of the day, In the blackness of night and the darkness. And, behold, there met him a woman With the attire of a harlot, and wily of heart. She is riotous and rebellious, and so on.*[38] *Now she is in the streets, now in the broad places, and so on.*[39] *So she caught him, and so on.*[40] *Sacrifices of peace-offerings were due from me, and so on.*[41] *Therefore came I forth to meet thee, and so on.*[42] *I have decked with coverlets, and so on.*[43] *I have perfumed my bed, and so on.*[44] *Come, let us take our fill of love, and so on.*[45] *For my husband is not at home, and so on.*[46] *The bag of money, and so on.*[47] *With her much fair speech she causeth him to yield. With the blandishment of her lips she enticeth him away.*[48] The outcome of all this is a warning against the pursuit of bodily pleasures and desires. Accordingly he [Solomon] likens matter, which is the cause of all these bodily pleasures, to a *harlot* who is also a *married woman.* In fact | his entire book is based on this allegory. And we shall explain in various chapters of this Treatise his wisdom in likening matter *to a married harlot*, and we shall explain how[49] he concluded this book of his with a eulogy of the *woman* who is not a *harlot* but confines herself to attending to the welfare of her household and husband.[50] For all the hindrances keeping man from his ultimate perfection, every deficiency affecting him and every disobedience, come to him from his matter alone, as we shall explain in this Treatise. This is the proposition that can be understood from this parable

38. The omitted words are: *her feet abide not in her house.*
39. The omitted words are: *and lieth in wait at every corner.*
40. The omitted words are: *and kissed him, and with impudent face she said unto him.*
41. The omitted words are: *this day have I paid my vows.*
42. The omitted words are: *diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.*
43. The omitted words are: *my bed, with striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt.*
44. The omitted words are: *with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.*
45. The omitted words are: *until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves.*
46. The omitted words are: *he is gone a long journey.*
47. The omitted words are: *he has taken with him, and will come home at the full moon.*
48. Prov. 7:6–21.
49. A literal translation; perhaps the sense requires "why."
50. Literally: the state of her husband.

as a whole. I mean that man should not follow his bestial nature;[51] I mean his matter, for the proximate matter of man is identical with the proximate matter of the other living beings.[52] And as I have explained this to you and disclosed the secret of this parable, you should not hope [to find some signification corresponding to every subject occurring in the parable][53] so that you could say: what can be submitted for the words, *Sacrifices of peace-offerings were due from me; this day have I paid my vows?* What subject is indicated by the words, *I have decked my couch with coverlets?* And what subject is added to this general proposition by the words, *For my husband is not at home?* The same holds good for the other details in this *chapter*. For all of them only figure in the consistent development of the parable's external meaning, the circumstances described in it being of a kind typical for adulterers. Also the spoken words and other such details are of a kind typical of words spoken among adulterers. Understand this well from what I have said for it is a great and important principle with regard to matters that I wish to explain.

When, therefore, you find that in some chapter of this Treatise I have explained the meaning of a parable and have drawn your attention to the general proposition signified by it, you should not inquire into all the details occurring in the parable, nor should you wish to | find significations corresponding to them. For doing so would lead you into one of two ways: either into turning aside from the parable's intended subject, or into assuming an obligation to interpret things not susceptible of interpretation and that have not been inserted with a view to interpretation. The assumption of such an obligation would result in extravagant fantasies such as are entertained and written about in our time by most of the sects of the world, since each of these sects desires to find certain significations for words whose author in no wise had in mind the significations wished by them. Your purpose, rather, should always be to know, regarding most parables, the whole that was intended to be known. In some matters it will suffice you to gather from my remarks that a given story is a parable, even if we explain nothing more; for once you know it is a parable, it will immediately become clear to you what it is a parable of. My remarking that it is a parable will be like someone's removing a screen from between the eye and a visible thing.

51. Literally: his bestiality. 52. Or: the other animals.
53. The words enclosed in brackets appear in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation, but not in the printed Arabic text. There is little doubt that in this case Ibn Tibbon's text is more correct.

INSTRUCTION WITH RESPECT TO THIS TREATISE

If you wish to grasp the totality of what this Treatise contains, so that nothing of it will escape you, then you must connect its chapters one with another; and when reading a given chapter, your intention must be not only to understand the totality of the subject of that chapter, but also to grasp each word that occurs in it in the course of the speech, even if that word does not belong to the intention of the chapter. For the diction of this Treatise has not been chosen at haphazard,[54] but with great exactness and exceeding precision, and with care to avoid failing to explain any obscure point. And nothing has been mentioned out of its place, save with a view to explaining some matter in its proper place. You therefore should not let your fantasies elaborate on what is said here, for that would hurt me and be of no use to yourself. You ought rather to learn everything | that ought to be learned and constantly study this Treatise. For it then will elucidate for you most of the obscurities of the Law that appear as difficult to every intelligent man. I adjure—by God, may He be exalted!—every reader of this Treatise of mine not to comment upon a single word of it and not to explain to another anything in it save that which has been explained and commented upon in the words of the famous Sages of our Law who preceded me. But whatever he understands from this Treatise of those things that have not been said by any of our famous Sages other than myself should not be explained to another; nor should he hasten to refute me, for that which he understood me to say might be contrary to my intention. He thus would harm me in return for my having wanted to benefit him and would *repay evil for good.*[55] All into whose hands it falls should consider it well; and if it slakes his thirst, though it be on only one point from among the many that are obscure,[56] he should thank God and be content with what he has understood. If, on the other hand, he finds nothing in this Treatise that might be of use to him in any respect, he should think of it as not having been composed at all. If anything in it, according to his way of thinking, appears to be in some way harmful, he should interpret it, even if in a far-fetched way, in order to *pass a favorable judgment.*[57] For as we are enjoined

54. Literally: the speech does not fall as it may happen.
55. Cf. Ps. 38:21.
56. Literally: though it were only in a certain matter from among the complex of what is difficult.
57. Cf. Mishnah, Aboth, I 6.

to act in this way toward our vulgar ones, all the more should this be so with respect to our erudite ones and Sages of our Law who are trying to help us to the truth as they apprehend it. I know that, among men generally, every beginner will derive benefit from some of the chapters of this Treatise, though he lacks even an inkling of what is involved in speculation. A perfect man, on the other hand, devoted to Law and, as I have mentioned, perplexed, will benefit from all its chapters. How greatly will he rejoice in them and how pleasant will it be to hear them! But those who are confused and whose brains have been polluted by false opinions and misleading ways deemed by them to be | true sciences, and who hold themselves to be men of speculation without having any knowledge of anything that can truly be called science,[58] those will flee from many of its chapters. Indeed, these chapters will be very difficult for them to bear because they cannot apprehend their meaning and also because they would be led to recognize the falseness of the counterfeit money in their hands—their treasure and fortune held ready for future calamities. God, may He be exalted, knows that I have never ceased to be exceedingly apprehensive about setting down those things that I wish to set down in this Treatise. For they are concealed things; none of them has been set down in any book—written in the religious community[59] in these times of *Exile*[60]—the books composed in these times being in our hands. How then can I now innovate and set them down? However, I have relied on two premises, the one being [the Sages'] saying in a similar case, *It is time to do something for the Lord, and so on;*[61] the second being their saying, *Let all thy acts be for the sake of Heaven.*[62] Upon these two premises have I relied when setting down what I have composed in some of the chapters of this Treatise.

To sum up: I am the man who when the concern pressed him and his way was straitened and he could find no other device by which to teach a demonstrated truth other than by giving satisfaction to a single virtuous man while displeasing ten thousand ignoramuses—I am he who prefers to address that single man by himself, and I do not heed the blame of those many creatures. For I claim to liberate that virtuous one from that into

58. In this phrase the same Arabic term is translated by two words: "knowledge" and "science."
59. Meaning the Jewish community. 60. The Hebrew word *galuth* is used.
61. The verse continues as follows: *for they have infringed Thy Law.* Ps. 119:126; cf. B.T., Berakhoth, 63.
62. Mishnah, Aboth, II 17.

which he has sunk, and I shall guide him in his perplexity until he becomes perfect and he finds rest.

INTRODUCTION

One of seven causes should account for the contradictory or contrary statements to be found in any book or compilation.

The first cause. The author | has collected the remarks of various people with differing opinions, but has omitted citing his authorities and has not attributed each remark to the one who said it. Contradictory or contrary statements can be found in such compilations because one of the two propositions is the opinion of one individual while the other proposition is the opinion of another individual.

The second cause. The author of a particular book has adopted a certain opinion that he later rejects; both his original and later[63] statements are retained in the book.

The third cause. Not all the statements in question are to be taken in their external sense; some are to be taken in their external sense, while some others are parables and hence have an inner content. Alternatively, two apparently contradictory propositions may both be parables and when taken in their external sense may contradict, or be contrary to, one another.

The fourth cause. There is a proviso that, because of a certain necessity, has not been explicitly stated in its proper place; or the two subjects may differ, but one of them has not been explained in its proper place, so that a contradiction appears to have been said, whereas there is no contradiction.

The fifth cause arises from the necessity of teaching and making someone understand. For there may be a certain obscure matter that is difficult to conceive. One has to mention it or to take it as a premise in explaining something that is easy to conceive and that by rights ought to be taught

63. Literally: his first and his second.

before the former, since one always begins with what is easier. The teacher, accordingly, will have to be lax and, using any means that occur to him or gross speculation, will try to make that first matter somehow understood. He will not undertake to state the matter as it truly is in exact terms, but rather will leave it so in accord with the listener's imagination that the latter will understand only what he now wants him to understand. Afterwards, in the appropriate place, that obscure matter is stated in exact terms and explained as it truly is.

The sixth cause. | The contradiction is concealed and becomes evident only after many premises. The greater the number of premises needed to make the contradiction evident, the more concealed it is. It thus may escape the author, who thinks there is no contradiction between his two original propositions. But if each proposition is considered separately – a true premise being joined to it and the necessary conclusion drawn – and this is done to every conclusion – a true premise being joined to it and the necessary conclusion drawn –, after many syllogisms the outcome of the matter will be that the two final conclusions are contradictory or contrary to each other. That is the kind of thing that escapes the attention of scholars who write books. If, however, the two original propositions are evidently contradictory, but the author has simply forgotten the first when writing down the second in another part[64] of his compilation, this is a very great weakness, and that man should not be reckoned among those whose speeches deserve consideration.

The seventh cause. In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain dicta this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premise contradicting the first one. In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means.

The contradictions that are to be found in the *Mishnah* and the *Baraithoth* are due to the first cause. Thus you will find that they constantly ask: *Does not the beginning* [*of the passage*] *constitute an objection against its end?* In such cases the answer is: *The beginning is the opinion of a certain rabbi and the end that of another rabbi.* You likewise will find that

64. Literally: place.

they say: *Rabbi* [*Judah ha-Nasi*] *agreed with the opinion of a certain rabbi in this one* | *matter and therefore cited it anonymously. In that other matter he agreed with the opinion of that other rabbi and therefore cited it anonymously.* You often will find them also saying: *Who is the author of this anonymous passage? Such and such rabbi. Who is the author of that passage of the Mishnah? Such and such rabbi.* Such cases are innumerable. The contradictions or divergences to be found in the *Talmud* are due to the first cause and to the second. Thus you find them constantly saying: *In this matter he agreed with this rabbi and in that with another rabbi.* They likewise say: *He agreed with him on one point and disagreed on another.* They also say: [*The two statements are made by*] *two Amoraim who disagree as to the opinion of a certain rabbi.* All contradictions of this kind are due to the first cause. Contradictions due to the second cause are referred to when they say: *Rab abandoned this opinion. Raba abandoned that opinion.* In such cases an inquiry is made as to which of the two statements is the later one. This is similar to their saying: *In the first recension* [*of the Talmud*] *by Rabbi Ashi, he said one thing, and in the second another.* That some passages in every prophetic book, when taken in their external sense, appear to contradict or to be contrary to one another is due to the third cause and to the fourth. And it was with this in view that this entire introduction was written. You already know how often [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed,* say: *One verse says this and another verse says that.* They straightway establish that there is an apparent contradiction. Thereupon they explain that a proviso is lacking in the statement of the subject or that the two texts have different subjects. Thus they say: *Solomon, is it not enough for you that your words contradict those of your father? They also contradict themselves, and so on.*[65] Cases of this are frequent in the sayings of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed;* however, most of the prophetic statements they refer to concern commandments or precepts regarding conduct. We, on the other hand, | propose to draw attention to *verses* that are apparently contradictory with regard to opinions and beliefs. Part of this will be explained in some of the chapters of this Treatise, for this subject too belongs to *the mysteries of the Torah.* Whether contradictions due to the seventh cause are to be found in the books of the prophets is a matter for speculative study and investigation. Statements about this should not be a matter of conjecture. As for the divergences occurring in the books of the philosophers, or rather of those who know the truth, they are due to the fifth cause. On

65. B.T., Shabbath, 30a.

the other hand, the contradictions occurring in most of the books of authors and commentators other than those we have mentioned are due to the sixth cause. Likewise in the *Midrashim* and the *Haggadah* there is to be found great contradiction due to this cause. That is why the Sages have said: *No questions should be asked about difficulties in the Haggadah.* There are also to be found therein contradictions due to the seventh cause. Divergences that are to be found in this Treatise are due to the fifth cause and the seventh. Know this, grasp its true meaning, and remember it very well so as not to become perplexed by some of its chapters.

And after these introductory remarks, I shall begin to mention the terms whose true meaning, as intended in every passage according to its context, must be indicated. This, then, will be a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. And when these gates are opened and these places are entered into, the souls will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor. |

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation
that keepeth faithfulness may enter in[1]

CHAPTER 1

Image [*ṣelem*] and *likeness* [*demuth*]. People have thought that in the Hebrew language *image* denotes the shape and configuration of a thing. This supposition led them to the pure doctrine of the corporeality of God, on account of His saying: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*[2] For they thought that God has a man's form, I mean his shape and configuration. The pure doctrine of the corporeality of God was a necessary consequence to be accepted by them. They accordingly believed in it and deemed that if they abandoned this belief, they would give the lie to the biblical text; that they would even make the deity to be nothing at all unless they thought that God was a body provided with a face and a hand, like them in shape and configuration. However, He is, in their view, bigger and more resplendent than they themselves, and the matter of which He is composed is not flesh and blood. As they see it, this is as far as one can go in establishing the separateness of God from other things. Now with respect to that which ought to be said in order to refute the doctrine of the corporeality of God and to establish His real unity—which can have no true reality unless one disproves His corporeality—you shall know the demonstration of all of this from this Treatise. However, here, in this chapter, only an indication is given with a view to elucidating the meaning of *image* and *likeness.*

Now I say that in the Hebrew language the proper term designating the form that is well known among the multitude, namely, that form which is the shape and configuration of a thing, is *to'ar.* Thus Scripture says: *beautiful in form* [*to'ar*] | *and beautiful in appearance;*[3] *What form* [*to'aro*] *is he of?;*[4] *As the form* [*to'ar*] *of the children of a king.*[5] This term is

1. Isa. 26:2. 2. Gen. 1:26. 3. Gen. 39:6. 4. I Sam. 28:14. 5. Judg. 8:18.

also applied to an artificial form; thus: *He marketh its form* [*yeta'arehu*] *with a line, and he marketh its form* [*yeta'arehu*] *with a compass.*[6] Those terms[7] are never applied to the deity, may He be exalted; far and remote may this thought be from us. The term *image*, on the other hand, is applied to the natural form, I mean to the notion in virtue of which a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is. It is t' e true reality of the thing in so far as the latter is that particular being. In man that notion is that from which human apprehension derives. It is on account of this intellectual apprehension that it is said of man: *In the image of God created He him.*[8] For this reason also, it is said: *Thou contemnest their image.*[9] For *contempt* has for its object the soul, which is the specific form, not the shape and configuration of the parts of the body. I assert also that the reason why idols are called *images* lies in the fact that what was sought in them was the notion that was deemed to subsist in them, and not their shape and configuration. I assert similarly with regard to the scriptural expression: *images of your emerods.*[10] For what was intended by them was the notion of warding off the harm caused by the *emerods*, and not the shape of the *emerods*. If, however, there should be no doubt concerning the expressions *the images of your emerods* and *images* being used in order to denote shape and configuration, it would follow that *image* is an equivocal or amphibolous term applied to the specific form and also to the artificial form and to what is analogous to the two in the shapes and configurations of the natural bodies. That which was meant in the scriptural dictum, *let us make man in our image,*[11] was the specific form, which is intellectual apprehension, not the shape and configuration. We have explained to you the difference between *image* and *form*, and have explained the meaning of *image*.

As for the term *likeness* [*demuth*], it is a noun derived from the verb *damoh* [*to be like*], and it too signifies likeness in respect of a notion. For the scriptural dictum, *I am like a pelican in the wilderness,*[12] does not signify that its author | resembled the pelican with regard to its wings and feathers, but that his sadness was like that of the bird. In the same way in the verse, *Nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto it in beauty,*[13] the likeness is with respect to the notion of beauty. Similarly the verses, *Their venom is in the likeness of the venom of a serpent*[14] and *His likeness is that of a lion that*

6. Isa. 44:13.
7. The plural conforms to the Arabic text. However, as far as one can see, the sentence has in view only one term, namely, *to'ar*.
8. Gen. 1:27. 9. Ps. 73:20. 10. I Sam. 6:5. 11. Gen. 1:26. 12. Ps. 102:7.
13. Ezek. 31:8. 14. Ps. 58:5.

is eager to tear in pieces,[15] refer both of them to a likeness in respect of a notion and not with respect to a shape and a configuration. In the same way it is said, *the likeness of the throne, the likeness of a throne*;[16] the likeness referred to being in respect of elevation and sublimity, not in respect of a throne's square shape, its solidity, and the length of its legs, as wretched people think. A similar explanation should also be applied to the expression: *the likeness of the living creatures*.[17] Now man possesses as his proprium something in him that is very strange as it is not found in anything else that exists under the sphere of the moon, namely, intellectual apprehension. In the exercise of this, no sense, no part of the body, none of the extremities are used; and therefore this apprehension was likened unto the apprehension of the deity, which does not require an instrument, although in reality it is not like the latter apprehension, but only appears so to the first stirrings of opinion. It was because of this something, I mean because of the divine intellect conjoined with man, that it is said of the latter that he is *in the image of God and in His likeness*, not that God, may He be exalted, is a body and possesses a shape.

CHAPTER 2

Years ago a learned man propounded as a challenge to me a curious objection. It behooves us now to consider this objection and our reply invalidating it. However, before mentioning this objection and its invalidation, I shall make the following statement. Every Hebrew knew that the term *Elohim* is equivocal, designating the deity, the angels, and the rulers governing the cities. *Onqelos the Proselyte*, peace be on him, has made it clear, and | his clarification is correct, that in the dictum of Scripture, *And ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil*,[1] the last sense is intended. For he has translated: *And ye shall be as rulers*.

After thus having set forth the equivocality of this term, we shall begin to expound the objection. This is what the objector said: It is manifest from the clear sense of the biblical text that the primary purpose with regard to man was that he should be, as the other animals are, devoid of intellect, of thought, and of the capacity to distinguish between good and evil. However, when he disobeyed, his disobedience procured him as its necessary

15. Ps. 17:12. 16. Ezek. 1:26. 17. Ezek. 1:13.
1. Gen. 3:5.

consequence the great perfection peculiar to man, namely, his being endowed with the capacity that exists in us to make this distinction. Now this capacity is the noblest of the characteristics[2] existing in us; it is in virtue of it that we are constituted as substances. Now it is a thing to be wondered at that man's punishment for his disobedience should consist in his being granted a perfection that he did not possess before, namely, the intellect. This is like the story told by somebody that a certain man from among the people disobeyed and committed great crimes, and in consequence was made to undergo a metamorphosis,[3] becoming a star in heaven. This was the intent and the meaning of the objection, though it was not textually as we have put it.

Hear now the intent of our reply. We said: O you who engage in theoretical speculation using the first notions that may occur to you and come to your mind and who consider withal that you understand a book that is the guide of the first and the last men while glancing through it as you would glance through a historical work or a piece of poetry—when, in some of your hours of leisure, you leave off drinking and copulating: collect yourself and reflect, for things are not as you thought following the first notion that occurred to you, but rather as is made clear through reflection upon the following speech.[4] For the intellect that God made overflow unto man and that is the latter's ultimate perfection, was that which *Adam* had been provided with before he disobeyed. It was because of this that it was said of him that he was created *in the image of God and in His likeness.* It was likewise on account of it that he was addressed by God and given commandments, as it says: *And the Lord | God commanded, and so on.*[5] For commandments are not given to beasts and beings devoid of intellect. Through the intellect one distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and that was found in [Adam] in its perfection and integrity. Fine and bad,[6] on the other hand, belong to the things generally accepted as known,[7] not to those cognized by the intellect. For one does not say: it is fine that heaven

2. *maʿānī.* The term has many meanings and often, as in this passage, cannot be satisfactorily translated.
3. The Arabic verb sometimes designates a particular kind of transmigration.
4. The word may also refer to the scriptural story, but the translation given in the text is somewhat more probable.
5. Gen. 2:16.
6. These two terms, rather than good and evil, have been chosen because the Arabic text does not use here the two most common terms (*al-khayr wa'l-sharr* employed earlier in this chapter) denoting the two notions in question, but rather has *al-ḥasan* and *al-qabīḥ.*
7. The expression, "the words (the things) generally accepted as known," render the Arabic term *al-mashhūrāt,* which is used as a translation of the Greek *endoxa.*

is spherical, and it is bad that the earth is flat; rather one says true and false with regard to these assertions. Similarly one expresses in our language the notions of truth and falsehood by means of the terms *emeth* and *sheqer*, and those of fine and bad by means of the terms *tov* and *ra*[c].[8] Now man in virtue of his intellect knows *truth* from *falsehood;* and this holds good for all intelligible things. Accordingly when man was in his most perfect and excellent state, in accordance with his inborn disposition and possessed of his intellectual cognitions — because of which it is said of him: *Thou hast made him but little lower than Elohim*[9] — he had no faculty that was engaged in any way in the consideration of generally accepted things, and he did not apprehend them. So among these generally accepted things even that which is most manifestly bad, namely, uncovering the genitals, was not bad according to him, and he did not apprehend that it was bad. However, when he disobeyed and inclined toward his desires of the imagination and the pleasures of his corporeal senses — inasmuch as it is said: *that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes*[10] — he was punished by being deprived of that intellectual apprehension. He therefore disobeyed the commandment that was imposed upon him on account of his intellect and, becoming endowed with the faculty of apprehending generally accepted things, he became absorbed in judging things to be bad or fine. Then he knew how great his loss was, what he had been deprived of, and upon what a state he had entered. Hence it is said: *And ye shall be like Elohim knowing good and evil;*[11] and not: *knowing the false and the true*, or *apprehending the false and the true.* With regard to what is of necessity, there is no *good* and *evil* at all, but only the *false* and the *true.* Reflect on the dictum: *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*[12] It is not said: *And the eyes of them both were opened,* | *and they saw.* For what was seen previously was exactly that which was seen afterwards. There had been no membrane over the eye that was now removed, but rather he entered upon another state in which he considered as bad things that he had not seen in that light before. Know moreover that this expression, I mean, *to open,*[13] refers only to uncovering mental vision and in no respect is applied to the circumstance that the sense of sight has been newly acquired. Thus: *And God opened her eyes;*[14] *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened;*[15] *Opening the ears, he heareth not*[16] — a verse that is analogous to its dictum, *That have eyes to see and see not.*[17] Now concerning

8. In Hebrew. 9. Ps. 8:6. 10. Gen. 3:6. 11. Gen. 3:5. 12. Gen. 3:7. 13. Used in the verse. 14. Gen. 21:19. 15. Isa. 35:5. 16. Isa. 42:20. 17. Ezek. 12:2.

its dictum with regard to *Adam — He changes his face and Thou sendest him forth*[18] — the interpretation and explanation of the verse are as follows: when the direction toward which man tended[19] changed, he was driven forth. For *panim*[20] is a term deriving from the verb *panoh* [*to turn*], since man turns his face toward the thing he wishes to take as his objective. The verse states accordingly that when man changed the direction toward which he tended and took as his objective the very thing a previous commandment had bidden him not to aim at, he was driven out of the *Garden of Eden*. This was the punishment corresponding to his disobedience; it was *measure for measure*. He had been given license to eat good things and to enjoy ease and tranquillity. When, however, as we have said, he became greedy, followed his pleasures and his imaginings, and ate what he had been forbidden to eat, he was deprived of everything and had to eat the meanest kinds of food, which he had not used as aliment before — and this only after toil and labor. As it says: *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and so on; In the sweat of thy brow, and so on.*[21] And it explains and says: *And the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground.*[22] And God reduced him, with respect to his food and most of his circumstances, to the level of the beast. It says accordingly: *And thou shalt eat the grass of the field.*[23] And it also says in explanation of this story: *Adam,*[24] *unable to dwell in dignity, is like the beasts that speak not.*[25]

Praise be to the Master of the will whose aims and wisdom cannot be apprehended! |

CHAPTER 3

It is thought that in the Hebrew language the meanings of the words *figure* [*temunah*] and *shape* [*tabnith*] are identical. This is not the case. For *tabnith* is a term deriving from the verb *banoh* [*to build*], and it signifies the build and aspect of a thing; I mean to say its shape, for instance, its being a square, a circle, a triangle, or some other shape. Accordingly it

18. Job 14:20.
19. The Arabic word derives from a root from which the usual word for "face" is likewise derived.
20. The Hebrew word for "face." 21. Gen. 3:18–19. 22. Gen. 3:23. 23. Gen. 3:18.
24. Or: man. 25. Ps. 49:13.

says: *The shape of the tabernacle and the shape of all its vessels.*[1] And it says: *According to the shape which thou wast shown upon the mountain;*[2] *the shape of any bird;*[3] *the shape of a hand;*[4] *the shape of the porch.*[5] In all these passages the word means shape. For this reason the Hebrew language does not use this word[6] with reference to attributes that apply in any way to the deity.

As for the term *figure*, it is used amphibolously in three different senses. It is used to designate the form of a thing outside the mind that is apprehended by the senses, I mean the shape and configuration of the thing. Thus it says: *And make you a graven image, the figure of any, and so on;*[7] *For ye saw no figure.*[8] It is also used to designate the imaginary form of an individual object existing in the imagination after the object of which it is the form is no longer manifest to the senses.[9] Thus it says, *In thoughts from the visions of the night, and so on,*[10] the conclusion of the dictum being, *It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof, a figure was before mine eyes.* He means: a fantasm of the imagination[11] that is before my eyes while in sleep. The term is also used to designate the true notion grasped by the intellect. It is with a view to this third meaning that the word *figure* is used with reference to God, may He be exalted. Thus it says: *And the figure of the Lord shall he look upon.*[12] The meaning and interpretation of this verse are: he grasps the truth of God. |

CHAPTER 4

Know that the three words *to see* [*ra'oh*], *to look at* [*habbit*], and *to vision* [*ḥazoh*] are applied to the sight of the eye and that all three of them are also used figuratively to denote the grasp of the intellect. As for the verb *to see*, this is generally admitted by the multitude. Thus it says: *And he saw, and behold a well in the field.*[1] This refers to the sight of the eye. But it also says: *Yea, my heart hath seen much of wisdom and knowledge;*[2] and this refers to intellectual apprehension. Every *mention of seeing*, when referring to God, may He be exalted, has this figurative meaning – as when

1. Exod. 25:9. 2. Exod. 25:40. 3. Deut. 4:17. 4. Ezek. 8:3.
5. I Chron. 28:11. 6. Literally: these words. 7. Deut. 4:25. 8. Deut. 4:15.
9. Literally: after its absence from the senses. 10. Job 4:13.
11. Literally: he means an imagination. 12. Num. 12:8.
1. Gen. 29:2. 2. Eccles. 1:16.

Scripture says: *I saw the Lord;*[3] *And the Lord became seen to him;*[4] *And God saw that it was good;*[5] *I beseech Thee, let me see Thy glory;*[6] *And they saw the God of Israel.*[7] All this refers to intellectual apprehension and in no way to the eye's seeing, as the eye can only apprehend a body, one that is placed in some direction and, in addition, with some of the accidents of the body, I mean the body's coloring, shape, and so forth. Similarly God, may He be exalted, does not apprehend by means of an instrument, as will be explained later.

In the same way the word *to look at* is applied to the act of turning the eye toward a thing. Thus: *Look not behind thee;*[8] *But his wife looked back from behind him;*[9] *And if one look unto the land.*[10] The word is also used figuratively to designate the mind's turning and directing itself to the contemplation of a thing until it grasps it. Thus it says: *He*[11] *hath not looked at iniquity in Jacob;*[12] for *iniquity* is not seen by the eye. Similarly it says: *And they looked after Moses;*[13] of which words the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* have said[14] that they too have this figurative meaning, as they inform us that the Israelites watched his actions and words and scrutinized them. The word likewise has this meaning when it says: *Look now toward heaven;*[15] for this was in a *prophetic vision.* Every *mention of looking,* when referring | to God, may He be exalted, is in this figurative sense. Thus: *To look upon God;*[16] *And the figure of the Lord shall he look upon;*[17] *And Thou canst not look on mischief.*[18]

The word *to vision* is likewise used to designate the eye's seeing. Thus: *And let our eyes vision Zion.*[19] It has been applied figuratively to the apprehension of the heart. Thus: *Which he visioned concerning Judah and Jerusalem;*[20] *The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision.*[21] The word is used in the same figurative sense when it is said: *And they visioned God.*[22] Know this.

3. I Kings 22:19. 4. Gen. 18:1. 5. Gen. 1:10. 6. Exod. 33:18.
7. Exod. 24:10. 8. Gen. 19:17. 9. Gen. 19:26. 10. Isa. 5:30.
11. Apparently Maimonides, contrary to other opinions, considers that God is not the subject of this verse.
12. Num. 23:21. 13. Exod. 33:8.
14. Cf. Tanḥuma, Ki Tissa; Exodus Rabbah, LI; B.T., Qiddushin, 33b. Cf. B.T., Sanhedrin, 110a.
15. Gen. 15:5. 16. Exod. 3:6. 17. Num. 12:8. 18. Hab. 1:13.
19. Mic. 4:11. 20. Isa. 1:1. 21. Gen. 15:1. 22. Exod. 24:11.

CHAPTER 5

When the chief of the philosophers began to investigate very obscure matters and to attempt a proof concerning them, he excused himself by making a statement the meaning of which was as follows.[1] A student of his books should not, because of the subject of these researches, ascribe to him effrontery, temerity, and an excess of haste to speak of matters of which he had no knowledge; but rather he should ascribe to him the desire and the endeavor to acquire and achieve true beliefs to the extent to which this is in the power of man. In the same way we say that man should not hasten too much to accede to this great and sublime matter at the first try, without having made his soul undergo training in the sciences and the different kinds of knowledge, having truly improved his character, and having extinguished[2] the desires and cravings engendered in him by his imagination.[3] When, however, he has achieved and acquired knowledge of true and certain premises and has achieved knowledge of the rules of logic and inference and of the various ways of preserving himself from errors of the mind, he then should engage in the investigation of this subject. When doing this he should not make categoric affirmations in favor of the first opinion that occurs to him and should not, from the outset, strain and impel his thoughts toward the apprehension of the deity; he rather should feel awe and refrain and hold back until he gradually elevates himself. It is in this sense that it is said, | *And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God*;[4] this being an additional meaning of the verse over and above its external meaning that indicates that he hid his face because of his being afraid to look upon the light manifesting itself – and not that the deity, who is greatly exalted above every deficiency, can be apprehended by the eyes. [Moses], peace be on him, was commended for this; and God, may He be exalted, let overflow upon him so much of His bounty and goodness that it became necessary to say of him: *And the figure of the Lord shall he look upon.*[5] The *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have stated that this is a reward for his having at first *hidden his face so as not to look upon God.*[6]

1. Cf. Aristotle *De Caelo* ii.12.291b24 ff. Part of this passage may be translated as follows: ". . . one should say that which appears to be plausible, looking upon the readiness to do so as evidence of modesty rather than of temerity, provided that one rests content with but a little success in matters that cause us very great perplexity."
2. Literally: killed. 3. Literally: his imaginary desires and cravings.
4. Exod. 3:6. 5. Num. 12:8.
6. B.T., Berakhoth, 7a; Tanḥuma (Verona ed.), 23b.

The nobles of the children of Israel,[7] on the other hand, were overhasty, strained their thoughts, and achieved apprehension, but only an imperfect one. Hence it is said of them: *And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet, and so on*;[8] and not merely: *And they saw the God of Israel.* For these words are solely intended to present a criticism of their act of seeing, not to describe the manner of their seeing. Thus they were solely blamed for the form that their apprehension took inasmuch as corporeality entered into it to some extent[9]—this being necessitated by their overhasty rushing forward before they had reached perfection. They deserved *to perish.* However, [Moses], peace be on him, interceded for them; and they were granted a reprieve until the time they were burnt at *Taberah*, whereas *Nadab* and *Abihu* were burnt in the *Tabernacle of the Congregation*, as is stated in a correct tradition.[10] This having happened to these men, it behooves us, all the more, as being inferior to them, and it behooves those who are inferior to us, to aim at and engage in perfecting our knowledge of preparatory matters and in achieving those premises that purify apprehension of its taint, which is error. It will then go forward to look upon the divine holy Presence. It is accordingly said: *And let the priests also, that come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.*[11] Accordingly *Solomon* has bidden the man who wishes to reach this rank to be most circumspect. He said | warningly in parabolic language: *Guard thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.*[12]

I shall now go back in order to complete what we began to explain, and I shall say: Because of the hindrances that were a stumbling block to *the nobles of the children of Israel* in their apprehension,[13] their actions too were troubled; because of the corruption of their apprehension, they inclined toward things of the body. Hence it says: *And they visioned God, and did eat and drink.*[14] As for the rest[15] of this passage—namely, from the words of Scripture: *And there was under His feet, as it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone, and so on*[16]—it will be explained in some[17] of the chapters of this Treatise.

7. Exod. 24:11. 8. Exod. 24:10.
9. Literally: in which was included of corporeality that which was included.
10. Tanḥuma, Behaʿalotkha; Leviticus Rabbah, XX.
11. Exod. 19:22. 12. Eccles. 4:17.
13. Literally: *The nobles of the children of Israel* with what happened to them in their apprehension [in the way] of stumbling-blocks.
14. Exod. 24:11.
15. *tamām.* From the linguistic point of view Ibn Tibbon's translation of *sof* (end) is quite correct. However, the passage that Maimonides is about to quote precedes, in the biblical text, that to which he has just referred.
16. Exod. 24:10. 17. Or: in one.

Our whole purpose was to show that whenever the words *seeing*, *vision*, and *looking* occur in this sense, intellectual apprehension is meant[18] and not the eye's sight, as God, may He be exalted, is not an existent that can be apprehended with the eyes. If, however, an individual of insufficient capacity should not wish to reach the rank to which we desire him to ascend and should he consider that all the words [figuring in the Bible] concerning this subject are indicative of sensual perception of created lights —be they angels or something else—why, there is no harm in his thinking this.

CHAPTER 6

Man [*ʾish*] and *woman* [*ʾishshah*] are terms that at first were given the meaning[1] of a human male and a human female.[2] Afterwards they were used figuratively to designate any male or female among the other species of living beings. Thus it says: *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, the man and his woman.*[3] It is as if it said *male* and *female*. Thereupon the term *woman* was used figuratively to designate any object apt for, and fashioned with a view to being in, conjunction with | some other object. Thus it says: *The five curtains should be coupled together, a woman to her sister.*[4] Hereby it has been made clear to you that the terms *sister* [*aḥoth*] and *brother* [*aḥ*] are likewise used equivocally with figurative meaning just as with *man* and *woman*.

18. Literally: that all *seeing*, *vision*, and *looking* that occur in this sense are intellectual apprehension.
1. Literally: were posited. The implication is that the meaning of words is conventional.
2. Literally: man and woman. This translation could not be adopted because the Hebrew terms with which Maimonides is concerned in this chapter have also been rendered by these words.
3. Gen. 7:2. 4. Exod. 26:3.

CHAPTER 7

To bear children [*yalod*]. The notion understood by means of this word is well known. It is that of procreation. Thus: *And they have borne him children.*[1] Afterwards this word was used figuratively to designate the bringing to existence of natural things. Thus: *Before the mountains were brought forth.*[2] It was likewise used figuratively to designate, by analogy with procreation, the notion of earth bringing forth her vegetal produce. Thus: *And make it bring forth and bud.*[3] It was likewise used figuratively with reference to happenings occurring in time, as though they were things that were born. Thus: *Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*[4] It was likewise used figuratively with reference to happenings within thought and the opinions and doctrines that they entail. Thus it says: *And bore falsehood.*[5] It is a derivation from this meaning when it is said: *And they please themselves in the children*[6] *of strangers,*[7] that is, they are content with their opinions; or, as *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, has put it in his interpretation of this verse: *They walk according to the laws of the gentiles.* In this sense whoever instructs an individual in some matter and teaches[8] him an opinion, has, as far as his being provided with this opinion is concerned, as it were engendered that individual. In this sense the prophets' disciples were called *sons of the prophets*, as we shall explain when treating the equivocality of the term *son*. In this figurative sense it is said of *Adam: And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot*[9] [*a son*] *in his own likeness, after his image.*[10] It has already been explained to you what the meaning of *the image of Adam and his likeness* is. Now none of the children of [Adam] born before [Seth] had been endowed with true human form, which is | *the image of Adam and his likeness* referred to in the words: *the image of God and His likeness.* As for Seth, it was after [Adam] had instructed him and procured him understanding and after he had attained human

1. Deut. 21:15. 2. Ps. 90:2. 3. Isa. 55:10. 4. Prov. 27:1. 5. Ps. 7:15.
6. The word derives from the same Hebrew root as the verb dealt with in this chapter.
7. Isa. 2:6.
8. *afāda*. The original meaning of the word is "to be useful to." The fact that it acquired the secondary meaning "to teach," is indubitably due to its having been used as an equivalent of the Greek verb *ōphelein*, the original signification of which is identical with that of *afāda*. In late Greek philosophic texts it sometimes also has the meaning "to teach." In medieval texts the Hebrew *hoʿil* sometimes also has this meaning, as it was used by the translators to render *afāda* in all its senses.
9. The Hebrew word derives from the root with which this chapter is concerned.
10. Gen. 5:3.

perfection that it was said of him: *And [Adam] begot [a son] in his own likeness, after his image.* You know that whoever is not endowed with this form, whose signification we have explained, is not a man, but an animal having the shape and configuration of man. Such a being, however, has a faculty to cause various kinds of harm and to produce evils that is not possessed by the other animals. For he applies the capacities for thought and perception, which were to prepare him to achieve a perfection that he has not achieved, to all kinds of machinations entailing evils and occasioning and engendering all kinds of harm. Accordingly, he is, as it were, a thing resembling man or imitating him. The children of *Adam* who preceded *Seth* were of this sort. The authors of the *Midrash* say accordingly:[11] *During the entire period of a hundred and thirty years, when Adam was under rebuke, he begot spirits;* they mean *devils.* When, however, He again accorded him His favor, he begot a son resembling him, I mean *in his own likeness, after his image.* Accordingly it says: *And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot [a son] in his own likeness, after his image.*

CHAPTER 8

Place [maqom]. Originally this term was given the meaning of particular and general place. Subsequently, language extended its meaning and made it a term denoting an individual's rank and situation; I mean to say with reference to his perfection in some matter, so that it is said: *A certain man has a certain place* with regard to a certain matter. You know how often the people of our language use this meaning when they say: *Occupying the place of his ancestors; He occupied the place of his ancestors in wisdom or piety;* | or when they say: *The difference of opinion still subsists in its place,* which means, in its station. It is in this figurative manner that it is said: *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place,*[1] meaning, according to His rank and the greatness of His portion in existence. Similarly in every mention of *place* referring to God, the sole intention is to signify the rank of His existence, may He be exalted; there being nothing like or similar to that existence, as shall be demonstrated.

Know with regard to every term whose equivocality we shall explain

11. B.T., ʿErubin, 18b; cf. Genesis Rabbah, XX and XXIV.
1. Ezek. 3:12.

to you in this Treatise that our purpose in such an explanation is not only to draw your attention to what we mention in that particular chapter. Rather do we open a gate and draw your attention to such meanings of that particular term as are useful for our purpose, not for the various purposes of whoever may speak the language of this or that people. As for you, you should consider the books of prophecy and other works composed by men of knowledge, reflect on all the terms used therein, and take every equivocal term in that one from among its various senses that is suitable in that particular passage. These our words are the key to this Treatise and to others; a case in point being the explanation we have given here of the meaning of the term *place* in the dictum of Scripture: *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place.* For you should know that this very meaning is that of the term *place* in its dictum: *Behold, there is a place by Me.*[2] In this verse the term signifies a rank in theoretical speculation and the contemplation of the intellect—not that of the eye; this being in addition to the meaning alluding to a local place that was to be found on that mountain on which the separation and the achievement of perfection came to pass.

CHAPTER 9

Throne [*kisse*]. Originally the meaning given to this word in the Hebrew language was that it was the term designating the throne.[1] As, however, only people of high rank and great authority, such as kings, used to sit on a throne, and the throne became an existent thing indicative of the grandeur, the high rank, and the great dignity of him who was thought worthy of it, the *Sanctuary* was called a *throne*, because of its indicating the grandeur of Him who manifested Himself therein and let His light and glory descend upon it. Thus Scripture says: *Thou throne of glory, on high from the beginning,*[2] *and so on.*[3] On account of this sense, the heaven is called a *throne*, as indicating to those who have knowledge of them and reflect upon them the greatness of Him who caused them to exist and to move, and who governs this lower world by means of the overflow of their bounty. Accordingly it says: *Thus saith the Lord: The heaven is My throne, and so on.*[4]

2. Exod. 33:21.
1. Maimonides uses the Arabic term to render the Hebrew one.
2. Jer. 17:12.
3. The verse continues: *Thou place of our Sanctuary.*
4. Isa. 66:1.

That is, He says: the heaven indicates My existence, grandeur, and power, as a *throne* indicates the greatness of the individual who is considered worthy of it. That is the doctrine that those who investigate the truth ought to believe, whereas they ought not to believe that there is a body onto which the deity, may He be greatly exalted, raises Himself. For it will be demonstrated to you that He, may He be exalted, is not a body. How, therefore, could there be for Him a place and an abode situated above a body? The matter is just as we have pointed out: namely, every place, such as the *Sanctuary* or the heaven, distinguished by God and singled out to receive His light and splendour is called a *throne*. This term is given a wider meaning in the Hebrew language when it says: *For my hand upon the throne of the Lord.*[5] What is meant is the attribute of His greatness and sublimity; this ought not to be imagined as a thing outside His essence or as a created being from among the beings created by Him, so that He, may He be exalted, should appear to exist both without a *throne* and with a *throne*. That would be infidelity beyond any doubt. For it states explicitly: *Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity, Thy throne is from generation to generation*;[6] whereby it indicates that the throne is a thing inseparable from Him. Hence the term *throne* signifies, in this passage and in all those similar to it, His sublimity and greatness that do not constitute a thing existing outside His essence, as will be explained in some[7] of the chapters of this Treatise. |

CHAPTER 10

It already has been set forth that when we mention one of the equivocal terms in this Treatise, it is not our purpose to cite all the senses in which that particular term is used, for this is not a treatise on language. Of those senses we cite only such as we require for our purpose and no others. Of this sort are the terms *to descend* [*yarod*] and *to ascend* [*ʿaloh*].

The two terms *descending* and *ascending* have been given in the Hebrew language the respective meaning of descent and ascent.[1] Accordingly when a body moves from a certain place to a lower place, it is said *to descend*; and

5. Exod. 17:16. 6. Lam. 5:19. 7. Or: in one.

1. It seemed preferable to use the same English words for the Hebrew terms and their Arabic equivalents.

when it moves from a certain place to a higher place than the place in which it was, it is said *to ascend.* Subsequently these two terms were used figuratively to denote sublimity and greatness; so that when an individual's rank was lowered, he was said *to have descended*; when, on the other hand, his rank became higher in respect of sublimity, he was said *to have ascended.* Thus God, may He be exalted, says: *The stranger that is in the midst of thee shall ascend above thee higher and higher, and thou shalt descend, and so on.*[2] The text also says: *The Lord thy God will set thee in ascendancy above all the nations of the earth.*[3] And it says: *And the Lord magnified Solomon in ascendancy.*[4] You know also how often the Sages use the expression: *With regard to what is holy, men may be made to ascend, but not to descend.*[5] Similarly the term [to descend] is also used to denote a lower state of speculation; when a man directs his thought toward a very mean object, he is said *to have descended*; and similarly when he directs his thought toward an exalted and sublime object, he is said *to have ascended.* Now we, the community of men,[6] are, in regard to place as well as degree of existence, in a most lowly position if we are compared to the all-encompassing heavenly sphere;[7] whereas He, may He be exalted, | is in respect of true existence, sublimity, and greatness in the very highest position—an elevation that is not a spatial one. And as He, may He be exalted, wished—as He did—to let some of us have knowledge deriving from Him and an overflow of prophetic inspiration, the alighting of the prophetic inspiration upon the prophet or the coming-down of the Indwelling[8] to a certain place was termed *descent*; whereas the removal of this prophetic state from a particular individual or the cessation of the Indwelling in a place was termed *ascent.* In every case in which you find the terms *descent* and *ascent* applied to the Creator, may He be exalted, this last meaning is intended. Another similar case is that of a calamity befalling a people or a terrestrial zone in accordance with His pre-eternal will. With regard to this the prophetic books begin by stating, before describing the affliction, that He visited the action of these people and after that made their punishment come down upon them. This notion too is expressed by means of the term *descent;* the reason being that man is too insignificant to have his actions visited and to be punished for them, were it not for the pre-eternal will. This has been made clear in the books of prophecy, where it is said: *What is*

2. Deut. 28:43. 3. Deut. 28:1. 4. I Chron. 29:25.
5. Cf., e.g., Mishnah, Sheqalim, VI 4.
6. Literally: Adamites. I.e., descendants of Adam.
7. I.e., the highest heavenly sphere.
8. *sakīna*, an Arabic word that is the equivalent of the Hebrew *shekhinah.*

man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou shouldst visit him, and so on.[9] For this verse refers to this notion. It is for this reason that this is called *descent.* Thus Scripture says: *Come, let us descend, and there confound their language;*[10] *And the Lord descended to see;*[11] *I will descend now and see.*[12] In all these verses the notion is that of punishment befalling people of low condition. As for the first meaning – I mean that which refers to prophetic inspiration and to ennobling – it is frequent. Thus: *And I will descend and speak with thee;*[13] *And the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai;*[14] *The Lord will descend in the sight of all the people;*[15] *And God ascended from him;*[16] *And God ascended from Abraham.*[17] When, on the other hand, Scripture says, *And Moses ascended to God,*[18] the third meaning[19] of the term [to ascend] is meant; this, in addition to the fact that [Moses] *ascended to the top of the mountain* upon which the created light had descended. The verse does not mean that God, may He be exalted, | has a place up to which one may ascend or from which one may descend; He is exalted very high above the imaginings of the ignorant.

CHAPTER 11

Sitting [*yeshibah*]. The first meaning given to this term in our language was that of being seated. Thus: *Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat.*[1] But in view of the fact that a sitting individual is in a state of the most perfect stability and steadiness, this term is used figuratively to denote all steady, stable, and changeless states. Thus when promising *Jerusalem* permanence and stability while she is in possession of the highest of ranks, Scripture says: *She will rise and sit in her place.*[2] And it also says: *He maketh the barren woman to sit in her house;*[3] which means that He makes her firm and steady. In the latter sense it is said of God, may He be exalted: *Thou, O Lord, sittest for all eternity;*[4] *O Thou who sittest in the heaven;*[5] *He that sitteth in heaven.*[6] That is, the stable One who undergoes no manner of change, neither a change in His essence – as He has no modes[7] besides His essence

9. Ps. 8:5. 10. Gen. 11:7. 11. Gen. 11:5. 12. Gen. 18:21. 13. Num. 11:17.
14. Exod. 19:20. 15. Exod. 19:11. 16. Gen. 35:13. 17. Gen. 17:22. 18. Exod. 19:3.
19. Denoting the direction of thought to an exalted object.
1. I Sam. 1:9. 2. Zech. 14:10. 3. Ps. 113:9. 4. Lam. 5:19. 5. Ps. 123:1. 6. Ps. 2:4.
7. *ḥāl.* Modes were attributed to God by some of the latter Muʿtazilites, notably by Abū Hishām (d. 933) and his followers.

with respect to which He might change — nor a change in His relation to what is other than Himself — since, as shall be explained later, there does not exist a relation with respect to which He could change. And herein His being wholly changeless in every respect achieves perfection, as He makes clear, saying: *For I the Lord change not*,[8] meaning that He undergoes no change at all. In this sense, the term *sitting* is applied to Him, may He be exalted, in the verses I have cited. In most of these passages this term is used with reference to heaven, as the latter is changeless and without diversity; I mean to say that the individuals existing in it do not change, as do the individuals constituted by the terrestrial things, which are subject to generation and corruption. | Similarly when a relation is ascribed equivocally to Him, may He be exalted, with respect to the various species of beings subject to generation and corruption, He is also said to be *sitting*. For these species are permanent, well ordered, endowed with a stable existence, such as is the existence of the individuals of heaven. Thus it says: *He that sitteth above the circle of the earth*;[9] that is, the permanent and stable One over and above the circling of the earth — he means its rotation, the reference being to the things generated in it in rotation. It also says: *The Lord sitteth at the flood*.[10] It means that when the state of the earth is changed and corrupted, there is no change in the relation of God, may He be exalted, to things; this relation remains the same — stable and permanent — whether the thing undergoes generation or corruption. For this relation subsists only with regard to the species of the various things subject to generation, not with regard to the individuals. Consider every *mention of sitting* applied to God, and you will discover that it is used in this sense.

CHAPTER 12

Rising [*qimah*] is an equivocal term. One of its meanings is to get up, which is the opposite of *sitting*. Thus: *He did not rise nor move for him*.[1] It also has a meaning denoting the stability and validity of a matter. Thus: *The Lord will let His promise rise*;[2] *The field of Ephron arose*;[3] *The house that is in the* [*walled*] *city shall arise*;[4] *And the kingdom of Israel shall*

8. Mal. 3:6. 9. Isa. 40:22. 10. Ps. 29:10.
1. Esther 5:9. 2. I Sam. 1:23. I.e., He will keep His promise.
3. Gen. 23:17. I.e., was made sure. 4. Lev. 25:30.

arise in thy hand.[5] All *mention of rising* applied to God, may He be exalted, has this meaning. Thus: *Now will I rise, saith the Lord.*[6] What He intends to say by this is: Now will I carry out My decree, My promise, and My menace. Thus also: *Thou wilt arise and have compassion upon Zion;*[7] that is, Thou wilt carry out what Thou hast promised as to having mercy upon her. As one who decides to do something marks his impulse to do it | by rising, so whoever has revolted over some matter is said to rise up. Thus: *That my son hath made my servant rise up against me.*[8] And the word taken in this sense is used figuratively to denote the execution of God's decree against a people who have deserved punishment entailing their destruction. Thus: *And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam;*[9] *But he will rise against the house of the evil-doers.*[10] His words, *Now will I rise,* may likewise have this meaning; and similarly the words: [*Thou*] *wilt arise and have compassion upon Zion;*[11] he means: *Thou wilt arise against her enemies.* Many biblical texts conform to this meaning,[12] for there is not to be found in them a rising-up and a sitting-down of God, may He be exalted. Accordingly [the Sages], peace be on them, have said: *In the upper world there is neither sitting nor standing;*[13] for *standing* sometimes occurs in the sense of *rising.*

CHAPTER 13

Standing [*ʿamidah*] is an equivocal term. Sometimes it has the meaning: to rise and stand. Thus: *When he stood before Pharaoh;*[1] *Though Moses and Samuel stood;*[2] *And he stood by them.*[3] And sometimes it has the meaning: to abstain and desist. Thus: *Because they stood still and answered no more;*[4] *And she left off*[5] *bearing.*[6] Elsewhere it has the meaning: to be stable and durable. Thus: *That they may stand many days;*[7] *Then shalt thou be able to stand;*[8] *His taste stood in him,*[9] that is, it was stable, durable,

5. I Sam. 24:21. I.e., shall be established.
6. Ps. 12:6; Isa. 33:10. 7. Ps. 102:14. 8. I Sam. 22:8. 9. Amos 7:9.
10. Isa. 31:2.
11. Ps. 12:6; Isa. 33:10.
12. Literally: and from this meaning occur many texts.
13. B.T., Ḥagigah, 15a.
1. Gen. 41:46. 2. Jer. 15:1. 3. Gen. 18:8. 4. Job 32:16.
5. Literally: *stood.* 6. Gen. 29:35. 7. Jer. 32:14.
8. Exod. 18:23. I.e., to endure. 9. Jer. 48:11.

and unchanged; *His righteousness standeth for ever*[10] that is, it is permanent and enduring. Whenever the term *standing* occurs with reference to God, may He be exalted, it is used in the last sense. Thus: *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives*,[11] that is, his intermediate causes, I mean His effects, shall be established. This shall be made clear when the equivocality of the term *foot* is mentioned. This meaning also occurs in the words of God, may He be exalted, [to Moses]: *But as for thee, stand thou here by Me*;[12] and in the verse: *I stood between the Lord and you.*[13] |

CHAPTER 14

The equivocality of the word *Adam*.[1] It is the name of *Adam the first* man, and is a derivative word; for, as the biblical text states, it is derived from the word *adamah*.[2] It is also the term designating the species. Thus: *My spirit shall not abide in man*;[3] *Who knoweth the spirit of the sons of man*;[4] *So that man hath no pre-eminence above a beast*.[5] It is also a term designating the multitude, I mean the generality as distinguished from the elite. Thus: *Both the sons of man and the sons of an* [*outstanding*] *individual*.[6] This third meaning is to be found in the following verses: *The sons of Elohim saw the daughters of man*;[7] *Nevertheless ye shall die as men*.[8]

CHAPTER 15

To *stand erect* [*naṣob* or *yaṣob*]. Though these two roots are different, their meaning, as you know, is identical in all their various forms. The term is equivocal. Sometimes it has the meaning of rising and being erect. Thus: *And his sister stood erect afar off*;[1] *The kings of the earth stood*

10. Ps. 111:3. 11. Zech. 14:4. 12. Deut. 5:28. 13. Deut. 5:5.
1. In Hebrew the word also means "man." 2. I.e., earth.
3. *Adam* in Hebrew. Gen. 6:3. 4. Eccles. 3:21. 5. Eccles. 3:19. 6. Ps. 49:3.
7. *Adam* in Hebrew. The expression, *the daughters of man*, signifies "belonging to the common people." It would seem therefore that the expression, *the sons of Elohim*, refers to the elite. Gen. 6:2.
8. Ps. 82:7.
1. Exod. 2:4.

erect;[2] *They came out and stood erect.*[3] The term has also another meaning: to be stable and permanent. Thus: *Thy word stands erect in heaven;*[4] this means that it is stable and constant. In all cases where this term occurs with reference to the Creator, it has this meaning. Thus: *And, behold, the Lord stood erect upon it,*[5] that is, was stably and constantly upon it—I mean upon the ladder, one end of which is in heaven, while the other end is upon the earth. Everyone who ascends does so climbing up this ladder,[6] so that he necessarily apprehends Him who is upon it,[7] as He is stably and permanently at the top of the ladder. It is clear that what I say here of Him conforms to the parable propounded. For *the angels of* | *God*[8] are the prophets with reference to whom it is clearly said: *And He sent an angel;*[9] *And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim.*[10] How well put is the phrase *ascending and descending,*[11] in which *ascent* comes before *descent.* For after the *ascent* and the attaining of certain[12] rungs of the ladder that may be known comes the descent with whatever decree[13] the prophet has been informed of—with a view to governing and teaching the people of the earth. As we have made clear,[14] it is on this account that this is called *descent.* I shall now return to our purpose. *Stood erect upon it* signifies God's being stable, permanent, and constant, not the erect position of a body. The same meaning is to be found in the verse: *And thou shalt stand erect upon the rock.*[15] It has thus been made clear to you that as far as this purpose is concerned the terms *to stand erect* [*naṣob*] and *to stand* [*ʿamod*] have the same meaning. For Scripture also says: *Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb.*[16]

2. Ps. 2:2. 3. Num. 16:27. 4. Ps. 119:89. 5. Gen. 28:13.
6. Literally: upon it climbs and ascends everyone who ascends.
7. The Arabic phrase might also be translated: so that he apprehends Him who is upon it necessarily. However, for syntactic and other reasons, the translation in the text is probably the correct one.
8. Seen by Jacob going up and down the ladder.
9. Num. 20:16. 10. Judg. 2:1. 11. Gen. 28:12.
12. The Arabic word *maʿlūma* may also be translated "which are known."
13. The word *amr* may also be translated "matter" or "thing."
14. Cf. above in chap. 10: "When a man directs his thought toward a very mean object, he is said *to have descended.*"
15. Exod. 33:21.
16. Exod. 17:6. This verse appears to state that God will stand.

CHAPTER 16

Rock [*ṣur*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting a mountain. Thus: *And thou shalt smite the rock.*[1] It is also a term denoting a hard stone like flint. Thus: *Knives of rock.*[2] It is, further, a term denoting the quarry from which quarry-stones are hewn. Thus: *Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn.*[3] Subsequently, in derivation from the last meaning, the term was used figuratively to designate the root and principle of every thing. It is on this account that after saying: *Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn*, Scripture continues:[4] *Look unto Abraham your father, and so on*,[5] giving, as it were, an interpretation according to which the *rock* whence *ye were hewn* is *Abraham your father*. Tread therefore in his footsteps, adhere to his religion, and acquire his character, inasmuch as the nature of a quarry ought to be present in what is hewn from it. On account of the last meaning, God, may He be exalted, is designated as the *Rock*, as He is the principle | and the efficient cause of all things other than Himself. Accordingly it is said: *The Rock, His work is perfect;*[6] *Of the Rock that begot thee thou wast unmindful;*[7] *Their Rock had given them over;*[8] *And there is no Rock like our God;*[9] *The Rock of Eternity.*[10] The verse *And thou shalt stand erect upon the rock*[11] means: Rely upon, and be firm in considering, God, may He be exalted, as the first principle. This is the entryway through which you shall come to Him, as we have made clear when speaking of His saying [to Moses]: *Behold, there is a place by Me.*[12]

CHAPTER 17

Do not think that only the divine science should be withheld from the multitude. This holds good also for the greater part of natural science. In fact we have repeatedly[1] set down for you our dictum: *The Account of the Beginning*[2] *ought not to be taught in the presence of two men.* This is

1. Exod. 17:6. 2. Josh. 5:2. 3. Isa. 51:1. 4. Literally: says.
5. Isa. 51:2. 6. Deut. 32:4. 7. Deut. 32:18. 8. Deut. 32:30.
9. I Sam. 2:2. 10. Isa. 26:4. 11. Exod. 33:21.
12. The verse continues: *and thou shalt stand erect upon the rock*, a passage just quoted by Maimonides.

1. Cf. I Introduction. 2. I.e., natural science.

not only the case with regard to people adhering to Law, but also with regard to the philosophers and learned men of the various communities[3] in ancient times. For they concealed what they said[4] about the first principles and presented it in riddles. Thus Plato and his predecessors designated Matter as the female and Form as the male. Now you know that the principles of the existents subject to generation and corruption are three: Matter, Form, and Particularized Privation, which is always conjoined with Matter. For, were it not for this conjunction with Privation, Matter would not receive Form. It is in this sense that Privation is to be considered as one of the principles. However, when a form is achieved, the particular privation in question, I mean the privation of the form that is achieved, disappears, and another privation is conjoined with matter; and this goes on for ever, as has been made clear in natural science. Now as even those upon whom the charge of corruption would not be laid in the event of clear exposition used terms figuratively and resorted to teaching in similes, | how much all the more is it incumbent upon us, the community of those adhering to Law, not to state explicitly a matter that is either remote from the understanding of the multitude or the truth of which as it appears to the imagination of these people is different from what is intended by us. Know this also.

CHAPTER 18

To *approach* [*qarob*], *to touch* [*nago'a*], *to come near* [*nagosh*]. Those three terms, I mean *approaching*, *touching*, and *coming near*, sometimes signify to draw near and approach in space. Elsewhere they signify the union of cognition with what is cognized, which is, as it were, similar to the proximity of one body to another.

Examples of the first signification of *approaching*[1] — that is, approaching in space — are: *As he approached the camp*;[2] *And Pharaoh approached*.[3] The first signification of *touching* is the drawing near of one body to another. Thus: *And she caused it to touch his feet*;[4] *And he caused it to touch my mouth*.[5] The first signification of *coming near* is the act in which one

3. *milal*. The word means, in the first place, "religious communities"; but it also may have the secondary meaning of "national communities."
4. Literally: the speech.
1. Literally: as for the first meaning of *approaching*.
2. Exod. 32:19. 3. Exod. 14:10. 4. Exod. 4:25. 5. Isa. 6:7.

individual goes and moves toward another individual. Thus: *And Judah came near unto him.*[6]

The second signification of these three terms is union in[7] knowledge and drawing near through apprehension, not in[8] space. Thus Scripture, using the word *touching* in the sense of union in knowledge, says: *For her judgment toucheth heaven.*[9] As for *approaching*, it is said: *And the cause that is too hard for you, cause it to approach me.*[10] Scripture says, as it were, let me know it. The word is thus used to denote the act of letting somebody know a knowable thing. As for *coming near*, it is said: *And Abraham came near and said,*[11] while he was in a state of inspiration and prophetic trance, as shall be explained;[12] *Forasmuch as this people came near, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor Me.*[13]

Every *mention of approaching* and *coming near* that you find in the books of prophecy referring to a relation between God, may He be exalted, and a created being[14] | has this last meaning. For God, may He be exalted, is not a body, as shall be demonstrated to you in this Treatise. And accordingly He, may He be exalted, does not draw near to or approach a thing, nor does anything[15] draw near to or approach Him, may He be exalted, inasmuch as the abolition of corporeality entails that space be abolished;[16] so that there is no nearness and proximity, and no remoteness, no union and no separation, no contact and no succession. I do not think that you shall grow doubtful or perplexed because Scripture says: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him;*[17] *They take delight in approaching unto God;*[18] *The nearness of God is my good.*[19] For in all these verses nearness through cognition,[20] I mean cognitive apprehension, is intended, not nearness in space.[21] The same applies to its dicta: *Nigh unto it;*[22] *Approach thou and hear;*[23] *And Moses alone shall come near unto the Lord, but they shall not come near.*[24] The verse is to be interpreted in this way, unless you wish to consider that the expression *shall come near*, used with reference to *Moses*, means that the latter shall approach the place on the mountain upon which

6. Gen. 44:18. 7. Literally: of. 8. Literally: of. 9. Jer. 51:9.
10. Deut. 1:17. 11. Gen. 18:23. 12. Cf. I 21, and II 41. 13. Isa. 29:13.
14. Literally: a created of the created ones.
15. Literally: a thing of the things.
16. Literally: Inasmuch as in virtue of the abolition of corporeality space is abolished.
17. Ps. 145:18. 18. Isa. 58:2. 19. Ps. 73:28.
20. Literally: nearness of cognition.
21. Literally: nearness of place.
22. Deut. 4:7. The complete verse is as follows: *For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto it, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?*
23. Deut. 5:24. The verse continues: *all that the Lord our God shall say.*
24. Exod. 24:2.

the light, I mean *the glory of God*, has descended. For you are free to do so. You must, however, hold fast to the doctrinal principle[25] that there is no difference whether an individual is at the center of the earth, or, supposing that this were possible, in the highest part of the ninth heavenly sphere. For he is not farther off from God in the one case[26] and no nearer to Him in the other.[27] For nearness to Him, may He be exalted, consists in apprehending Him; and remoteness from Him is the lot of him who does not know Him.[28] And there are very many gradations in being near to or far away from Him in this respect. I shall explain the manner of these gradations in apprehension in one of the chapters of this Treatise. As for its dictum, *Touch the mountains that they may smoke*,[29] Scripture signifies thereby in parabolic language: let Thy decree come to them. It says in a similar way:[30] *And touch Thou him himself*,[31] meaning let Thy infliction come upon him. Consider in a similar way the term *touching* and all its derivatives in every passage in which they occur according to the context.[32] Sometimes the word is intended to signify the approach of one body to another, and sometimes union through[33] the cognition and apprehension of a certain thing. | For one who apprehends a thing that he did not apprehend before has, as it were, approached a thing that previously had been remote from him. Understand this.

CHAPTER 19

To *fill* [*malle*]. This is an equivocal term applied by people speaking the Hebrew language to a body's entering and filling up another body. Thus: *And she filled her pitcher*;[1] *An omerful for each*.[2] This usage is frequent.[3] The term is likewise applied to the coming to an end and completion of a measurable period of time. Thus: *And her days were fulfilled*;[4] *And forty days were fulfilled for him*.[5] The term is also employed to signify

25. Literally: root. 26. Literally: here. 27. Literally: there.
28. Literally: is for him that does not know Him.
29. Ps. 144:5. 30. Literally: just as it says. 31. Job 2:5.
32. Literally: according to it. 33. Literally: of.
1. Gen. 24:16.
2. Exod. 16:32–33. Maimonides' quotation does not conform exactly to the present biblical text.
3. Literally: and this is many. 4. Gen. 25:24.
5. Gen. 50:3.

the achievement of perfection in virtue and of the latter's ultimate end. Thus: *And full with the blessing of the Lord;*[6] *Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart;*[7] *He was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill.*[8] In this sense it is said: *The whole earth is full of His glory;*[9] the meaning of this verse being that the whole earth bears witness to His perfection, that is, indicates it. Similar is its dictum: *And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*[10] Every *mention of filling* that you will find referring to God is used in this sense, and not in the sense of there being a body filling a place. However, if you wish to consider that the *glory of the Lord* is the created light that is designated as *glory* in every passage and that *filled the tabernacle*, there is no harm in it.

CHAPTER 20

High [*ram*] is an equivocal term having the signification of being elevated in space and of being elevated in degree, I mean to say in exalted station, nobility, and great worth. Thus it says: *And the ark was lifted high above the earth.*[1] In this passage | the first sense of the term is employed. It also says: *I have placed on high one chosen*[2] *out of the people;*[3] *Forasmuch as I have placed thee on high from among*[4] *the dust;*[5] *Forasmuch as I have placed thee on high from among the people.*[6] In these verses the term in question has its second meaning. Every word derived from *heightening*[7] [*haramah*] has this second meaning when occurring with reference to God. Thus: *Be thou heightened, O God, above the heavens.*[8]

The term *to bear* [*naso'*][9] has similarly the signification of elevation in space and of elevation in degree and abundance of good fortune. The

6. Deut. 33:23. 7. Exod. 35:35. 8. I Kings 7:14. 9. Isa. 6:3.
10. Exod. 40:34.
1. Gen. 7:17. The quotation is not quite exact. The text reads: *And the waters increased and bore up the ark and it was lifted high above the earth.*
2. Or: *a young man.* 3. Ps. 89:20.
4. The preposition preceding the words, *the dust*, is not correctly quoted by Maimonides, who replaces *min* by *mit-tokh*, a preposition occurring in the verse quoted by him immediately afterwards.
5. I Kings 16:2. 6. I Kings 14:7.
7. Literally: every word of *heightening.* 8. Ps. 57:6.
9. The adjective *nissa*, derivin gfrom this root, means "high," and a similar meaning is also to be found in certain verbal forms.

verse, *And they bore aloft their corn upon their asses*,[10] uses the word in its first sense. And similar instances are frequent in cases in which the word is used to signify carrying and transporting, for this implies lifting in space. The second meaning of the term is found in: *And his kingdom shall be borne aloft*;[11] *And He carried them and bore them*;[12] *Wherefore do you bear yourselves high*.[13] Every *mention of bearing* that occurs with reference to God, may He be exalted, has this latter meaning. Thus: *Bear Thee on high, Thou Judge of the earth*;[14] *Thus saith the High, [He that is] borne on high*.[15] In these passages, the word means elevation, exalted station, and great worth, not height in space. Perhaps my saying elevation in degree, exalted station, and great worth, creates a difficulty for you. For you may ask:[16] how can you consider that many notions are included in one meaning?[17] However, it shall be made clear to you that in the opinion of those who have perfect apprehension, there should not be many attributive qualifications predicated of God; and that all the numerous attributive qualifications indicating any exaltation of Him and of His great worth, power, perfection, bounty, and various other things, refer to one and the same notion. That notion is His essence and nothing outside this essence. Chapters on the names and attributes will reach you later. In this chapter my purpose is to show that the words: *The High, [He that is] borne on high*, do not have the meaning and signification of height in space, but of elevation[18] in degree.

CHAPTER 21

To pass [*ʿabor*]. The first meaning of this term is that of passage[1] in Arabic; and the first instances of its being used as concerned with | the movements of living beings over a certain distance in a straight line. Thus: *And he passed over them*;[2] *Pass before the people*.[3] Such instances are numerous. Subsequently the word was used figuratively to signify the

10. Gen. 42:26. 11. Num. 24:7. 12. Isa. 63:9. 13. Num. 16:3. 14. Ps. 94:2.
15. Isa. 57:15. 16. Literally: say.
17. The word *maʿānī*, translated as "notions," is the plural of the word *maʿnā*, translated as "meaning." The sentence might be translated literally as follows: How can you make many meanings out of one meaning?
18. In Arabic the same word is used as that which has been translated "height."
1. An Arabic word deriving from the same root as the Hebrew word dealt with in this chapter.
2. Gen. 33:3. 3. Exod. 17:5.

propagation of sounds in the air. Thus: *And they caused a voice to pass throughout the camp;*[4] *Which I hear the Lord's people cause to pass.*[5] Afterwards the word was figuratively used to signify the descent of the light and of the Indwelling[6] seen by the prophets *in the vision of prophecy*. Thus it says: *And behold a smoking furnace and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces.*[7] This happened *in a vision of prophecy*. For it says at the beginning of the story: *And a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and so on.*[8] It is in conformity with this figurative use that it is said: *And I shall pass through the land of Egypt*,[9] and that the term is used in all similar instances. Sometimes the term is applied figuratively to a man who, in accomplishing a certain action, has fallen into excess and overpassed the bounds. Thus it says: *And as a man whom wine has caused to overpass [the limit]*.[10] The term is also applied sometimes to one who has been caused to miss[11] one objective and thereupon aimed at another objective and at another goal. Thus: *He shot an arrow, causing it to pass by.*[12] In my opinion the dictum of Scripture, *And the Lord passed by before his face*,[13] conforms to this last figurative use; the possessive suffix in the third person attached to the Hebrew word *face* refers to God,[14] may He be exalted. The *Sages* have likewise considered that the *face*[15] mentioned in the verse is that of God, may He be exalted.[16] Though they have mentioned this opinion while setting forth *legends* that are out of place here, this affords some corroboration for our view. Accordingly, the third person of the possessive suffix figuring in the Hebrew word *His face* refers to *the Holy One, blessed be He.*[17] The explanation of this, according to what I think and to what occurs to me, is that *Moses*, peace be on him, demanded a certain apprehension — namely, that which in its dictum, *But My face shall not be seen*,[18] is named *the seeing of the face* — and was promised an apprehension inferior to that which he had demanded. It is this latter apprehension that is named *the seeing of the back* in its dictum: *And thou shalt see My back.*[19] We have already given a hint as to this meaning in *Mishneh Torah.*[20] Scripture accordingly says in this passage

4. Exod. 36:6. 5. I Sam. 2:24.
6. *sakīna* in Arabic, corresponding to *shekhinah* in Hebrew.
7. Gen. 15:17. 8. Gen. 15:12. 9. Exod. 12:12. 10. Jer. 23:9.
11. Or according to Ibn Tibbon's interpretation: who has missed. The Arabic also permits the interpretation: who has overpassed.
12. I Sam. 20:36. 13. Exod. 34:6. 14. And not to Moses.
15. Literally: this *His face*.
16. Cf. B.T., Rosh Hashanah, 17b.
17. Literally: *His face* is the third person of *the Holy One, blessed be He*. "His face" is expressed in Hebrew in one word.
18. Exod. 33:23. 19. Exod. 33:23.
20. Yesodei ha-Torah, I 10.

that God, may He be exalted, hid from him the apprehension called that *of the face* and made him pass over to something different; | I mean the knowledge of the acts ascribed to Him, may He be exalted, which, as we shall explain,[21] are deemed to be multiple attributes. When I say He hid from him, I intend to signify that this apprehension is hidden and inaccessible in its very nature. Moreover every perfect man – after his intellect has attained the cognition of whatever in its nature can be grasped – when longing for another apprehension beyond that which he has achieved, cannot but have his faculty of apprehension deceived or destroyed – as we shall explain in one of the chapters of this Treatise[22] – unless divine help attends him. As Scripture says: *And I will cover thee with My hand until I have passed.*[23] The [Aramaic] *translation*[24] of the Bible, when rendering this verse, does what it customarily does in similar cases.[25] For in every case in which it finds that a thing is ascribed to God to which the doctrine of corporeality or some concomitants of this doctrine are attached, it assumes that the nomen regens[26] has been omitted and considers that the ascription concerns something expressed by a term that is the nomen regens[27] of the genitive God and that has been omitted. Thus when Scripture says, *And, behold, the Lord stood erect upon it,*[28] it translates: *The glory of the Lord stood arrayed above it.* Again when Scripture says, *The Lord watch between me and thee,*[29] it translates: *The word of the Lord shall watch* [*between me and thee*]. This occurs throughout the translation of [Onqelos],[30] peace be upon him. He does the same thing with regard to the dictum of Scripture, *And the Lord passed by before his face,*[31] which he translates: *The Lord caused his Indwelling*[32] *to pass before his face, and he called.*[33] Thus according to him it was indubitably a created thing that *passed by*; he considers that in the expression, *his face*, the possessive suffix in the third person refers to *Moses our Master*. The interpretation of *before his face* would accordingly be: in his presence, as when Scripture says: *So the present passed before his face.*[34] This too is an excellent interpretation that may be approved of. A

21. Cf. I 34. 22. Cf. I 32. 23. Exod. 33:22. 24. That of Onqelos.
25. Literally: went according to its habit in these matters.
26. The Arabic word is *muḍāf*, the primary sense of which is "adjunct." Accordingly it is implied that in grammatical analysis the word thus described is less important than the genitive to which it is an adjunct. The term "nomen regens" obviously implies the opposite.
27. Cf. preceding note. 28. Gen. 28:13. 29. Gen. 31:49.
30. Literally: his translation. 31. Exod. 34:6. 32. *shekhinah*.
33. The Hebrew word that may be translated, *and he called*, is omitted by Maimonides when he quotes the Hebrew text of Exod. 34:6, but occurs in the Aramaic translation of this passage as quoted by him.
34. Gen. 32:22.

corroboration of the interpretation of *Onqelos the Proselyte, may his memory be blessed,* may be found in the dictum of Scripture: *And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by.*[35] This verse makes it clear that what *passeth* is a thing related[36] to God, may He be exalted, not the essence[37] of God, may His name be sublime; and it is thus of this *glory* that Scripture says, *Until I have passed by*, and, *And the Lord passed by before his face.* If it is necessary to assume an omitted nomen regens, as is always done by *Onqelos*—for, in accord with the context, sometimes he takes | the omitted word to be *glory*, and sometimes he takes it to be *Indwelling*, and sometimes he takes it to be *word*—we, for our part too, take the nomen regens omitted here to be *voice.* The assumption accordingly would be that the verse should read: *And the voice of the Lord passed by before him and called.* We have already explained that the Hebrew language uses the word *passage* in a figurative sense with reference to *voice.* Thus: *And they caused a voice to pass throughout the camp.*[38] In the verse in question it would[39] be the *voice* that *called.* You should not consider it as improbable that a *call* is ascribed to a *voice*, for it is in these very words[40] that expression is given to the fact that God, may He be exalted, spoke to *Moses.* For it says: *Then he heard the voice speaking unto him.*[41] Just as in this latter verse *speech* is ascribed to the *voice*, a *call* is attributed to the *voice* in the verse we are discussing. Sometimes this, I mean the ascription of *speech*[42] and of a *call* to a *voice*, occurs quite explicitly. Thus it says: *A voice saith: Call. And he said: What shall I call?*[43] According to this assumption, the interpretation of our verse would thus be: a voice from God passed by in his presence and called: *Lord, Lord.* The repetition of the word *Lord* would be due to its being a call, for He, may He be exalted, would be the one who is called. It would be like saying: *Moses, Moses; Abraham, Abraham.* This too is a very fine interpretation.

You should not consider as blameworthy the fact that this profound subject, which is remote from our apprehension, should be subject to many different interpretations. For this does no harm with respect to that toward which we direct ourselves. And you are free to choose whatever belief you wish. You may believe that the great station attained by [Moses] was

35. Exod. 33:22. 36. Or: ascribed.
37. *dhātuh.* The term may be translated either as "God's essence" or as "God Himself."
38. Exod. 36:6.
39. According to this explanation.
40. This statement contains a minor inaccuracy. In one verse the two Hebrew words are *qol* and *va-yiqra.* In the other the words are *haq-qol medabber.* This is pointed out by Maimonides two sentences further on.
41. Num. 7:89. 42. *amirah.* 43. Isa. 40:6.

indubitably, in its entirety, *a vision of prophecy* and that he solely desired intellectual apprehensions – everything, namely, that which he had demanded, that which was denied to him, and that which he apprehended, being intellectual and admitting of no recourse to the senses, as we had interpreted in the first place. Or you may believe that there was, in addition to this intellectual apprehension, an apprehension due to the sense of sight, which, however, had for its object a created thing, through seeing which the perfection of intellectual apprehension might be achieved. This would be the interpretation of this passage by *Onqelos*,[44] unless one assumes that this ocular[45] apprehension also occurred in *the vision of prophecy*, | as is stated with regard to *Abraham: Behold a smoking furnace and a flaming torch that passed.*[46] Or again you may believe that there was in addition an apprehension due to the sense of hearing; that which *passed by before his face* being the *voice*, which is likewise indubitably a created thing. Choose whatever opinion you wish, inasmuch as our only purpose is that you should not believe that when Scripture says, in the verse we are discussing, *He passed by*, the phrase is analogous to *Pass before the people.*[47] For God, may He be honored and magnified, is not a body, and it is not permitted to ascribe motion to Him. It is therefore impossible that He should have been said *to pass by* if the word is used in the first meaning given to it in the Hebrew language.

CHAPTER 22

To *come* [*bo'*]. *Coming* [*al-bi'ah*] in the Hebrew language has been given a meaning that refers to the coming of a living being, I mean his drawing near some place or some other individual. Thus: *Thy brother came with guile.*[1] The word has also been given a meaning that refers to a living being entering some place. Thus: *And Joseph came home;*[2] *When ye be come to the land.*[3] This term is also used figuratively to denote the coming about[4] of something that is not at all corporeal. Thus: *When thy words come to*

44. Literally: just as Onqelos interpreted this.
45. In Arabic an adjective derived from a word meaning "sight."
46. Gen. 15:17.
47. Exod. 17:5; in this passage Moses is ordered to pass.
1. Gen. 27:35. 2. Gen. 43:26. 3. Exod. 12:25.
4. *ḥulūl*. One of the primary senses of this word is "the act of descending."

pass we may do thee honor;[5] *From the things that shall come upon thee.*[6] It is, in consequence, applied figuratively even to certain privations.[7] Thus: *Yet trouble came;*[8] *And darkness came.*[9] Since the term had been thus figuratively applied to what is in no way a body, it was also figuratively applied to the Creator, may He be honored and magnified, either to the descent[10] of His decree or to that of His Indwelling. It is in view of this figurative use that it is said: *Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud;*[11] *For the Lord, the God of Israel, comes through it.*[12] All passages similar to these signify the descent of the Indwelling.[13] The verse, *And the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee,*[14] signifies, on the other hand, the descent of God's decree or the realization of the promises made by Him through His prophets. This last notion is signified in | the dictum: *All the holy ones with thee.* Scripture says, as it were: *And the word of the Lord my God shall come through all the holy ones who are with thee;* the people of *Israel* being the one addressed.

CHAPTER 23

Going out [al-*yeṣi'ah*] is the contrary of *coming*. The term is used to denote the going-out of a body, which may be a living being or not, from a place in which it rested to another place. Thus: *They were gone out of the city;*[1] *If fire break out.*[2] The term is applied figuratively to the manifestation of things that are in no way a body. Thus: *The word went out of the king's mouth;*[3] *When this deed of the queen shall come abroad,*[4] meaning the propagation[5] of the matter; *For out of Zion shall go forth the law.*[6] Thus also: *The sun was risen*[7] *upon the earth;*[8] I refer to the manifestation of the light. Every *mention of going out* occurring in Scripture with reference to Him, may He be exalted, conforms to this figurative use. Thus: *For, behold, the Lord goeth out of His place,*[9] that is, His decree, which at present is hidden from us, will become manifest. I refer to the coming into being of

5. Judg. 13:17. 6. Isa. 47:13.
7. The term is used here in the technical Aristotelian sense.
8. Job 30:26. 9. Job 30:26. 10. *ḥulūl*. Cf. n. 4, this chap. 11. Exod. 19:9.
12. Ezek. 44:2. 13. *sakīnah*. 14. Zech. 14:5.
1. Gen. 44:4. 2. Exod. 22:5. 3. Esther 7:8.
4. Literally: *shall go out*. Esther 1:17. 5. *nufūdh*. The word also means "effect."
6. Isa. 2:3. 7. Literally: *gone out*. 8. Gen. 19:23. 9. Isa. 26:21.

something[10] after its not having existed, for everything that comes into being from God, may He be exalted, is attributed to His decree. Thus: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.*[11] In this verse God's acts are likened to those that proceed from kings, whose instrument in giving effect[12] to their will is speech. However, God, may He be exalted, does not require an instrument by means of which He could act, for His acts are accomplished exclusively by means of His will alone; neither is there any speech at all, as shall be made clear.[13] Inasmuch as the term *going out*, as we have made clear, was figuratively applied to the manifestation of an act of God[14]—for Scripture says: *For, behold, the Lord goeth out of His place*[15]— the term *returning* [*shibah*] is figuratively applied to the cessation of such an act likewise brought about in virtue of God's will. It says accordingly, *I will go and return to My place,*[16] the signification of which is that the *Indwelling* | that had been among us is removed. This removal is followed[17] by a privation of providence, as far as we are concerned.[18] As it says by way of a threat: *And I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured.*[19] For a privation of providence leaves one abandoned and a target to all that may happen and come about, so that his ill and weal come about according to chance. How terrible is this threat! It is to this that it refers in its dictum: *I will go and return to My place.*[20]

CHAPTER 24

Going [al-*halikhah*] too is one of the terms referring to some particular motions of living beings. Thus: *And Jacob went on his way.*[1] This usage is frequent. Sometimes this term is used figuratively to designate the extension of bodies more subtle than the bodies of living beings. Thus: *And the waters went and decreased;*[2] *And fire went down unto the earth.*[3]

10. Literally: of that which comes into being. 11. Ps. 33:6.
12. *tanfīdh.* The verbal form derives from the same root as *nufūdh* (cf. n. 5, this chap.), also occurring in this chapter and translated "propagation."
13. Cf. I 65.
14. Literally: to the manifestation of an act of His acts. 15. Isa. 26:21. 16. Hos. 5:15.
17. According to the strict letter of the Arabic text, the Indwelling, rather than the removal, is followed by the privation of providence.
18. More or less literally: of providence among us.
19. Deut. 31:17. 20. Cf. this chapter, above.
1. Gen. 32:2. 2. Gen. 8:5. I.e., were gradually decreasing. 3. Exod. 9:23.

Subsequently this term was used figuratively to designate the spread and the manifestation of a certain thing even if the latter were in no way corporeal. Thus it says: *The voice thereof shall go like a serpent.*[4] Similar is its dictum: *The voice of the Lord God going about in the garden.*[5] It is the *voice* that was said to be *going about*. Every *mention of going* that occurs with reference to God, may He be exalted, conforms to this figurative use. I mean that with respect to what is incorporeal, it is used figuratively to denote either the spread of a thing[6] or the withdrawal of providence, which, in the case of a living being, has its analogy in the latter's turning away from a thing through *going*. And just as the withdrawal of providence is referred to as *the hiding of the face* – as in its dictum: *As for Me, I will surely hide My face*[7] – it also is referred to as *going*, which has the meaning | to turn away from a thing. Thus Scripture says: *I will go and return to My place.*[8] As for its dictum, *And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He went away*,[9] the two significations subsist together in the passage. I mean the signification of a withdrawal of providence referred to by means of the term "turning away," and the signification of a spread, diffusion, and manifestation of a thing. I mean to say that it was the *anger* that *went* and extended toward the two.[10] For this reason, [Miriam] *became leprous, as white as snow.*[11] The *term going* is also applied figuratively to living a good life,[12] without in any way moving a body. Thus it says: *And thou shalt go in His ways;*[13] *After the Lord your God shall ye go;*[14] *Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*[15]

4. Jer. 46:22. 5. Gen. 3:8.
6. *amr*. The word also means "command." However, other passages in this chapter seem to indicate that in this case the word should be translated "thing" or "matter."
7. Deut. 31:18. 8. Hos. 5:15. 9. Num. 12:9.
10. Viz., Aaron and Miriam. 11. Num. 12:10.
12. *Li'l-sayr bi'l-sīra al-fāḍila*. Literally: to going (or walking) a good or virtuous life. The word *sīra*, meaning "life" or "the conduct of life," derives from the verb *sāra*, "to go" or "walk."
13. Deut. 28:9. 14. Deut. 13:5. 15. Isa. 2:5.

CHAPTER 25

Shakhon. It is known that the meaning of this verb is, to dwell. Thus: *And he was dwelling by the terebinths of Mamre;*[1] *And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt.*[2] This is well known and generally accepted. Now dwelling signifies a permanent stay in a place of one's abode. Accordingly, when a living being has his abode in a place, by which either a general or a particular place may be meant, it is said of him that he dwells in that place, even if he undoubtedly moves within it. This verb is also figuratively applied to things that are not living beings and in fact to everything that is permanent and is attached to another thing. Of all such things the *term dwelling* may be used, even in cases in which the thing to which they are attached is not a place and they themselves not living beings. Thus it says: *Let a cloud dwell upon it.*[3] For there is no doubt that a *cloud* is not a living being, nor a *day* in any way a body,[4] being a portion of time. It is on account of this latter figurative sense that the verb is applied figuratively to God, may He be exalted—I mean to the permanence of His Indwelling[5] or His providence in | whatever place they may subsist in permanent fashion or toward whatever matter providence may be permanently directed.[6] Thus it is said: *And the glory of the Lord dwelt;*[7] *And I will dwell among the children of Israel;*[8] *And the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.*[9] In every case in which this occurs with reference to God, it is used in the sense of the permanence of His Indwelling—I mean His created light—in a place, or the permanence of providence with regard to a certain matter. Each passage should be understood according to its context.[10]

1. Gen. 14:13. 2. Gen. 35:22. 3. Job 3:5.
4. A reference to the passage in Job. Job wishes that the cloud should dwell upon a day (Job 3:5).
5. *sakīna.*
6. Literally: or every matter in which providence subsists permanently.
7. Exod. 24:16. 8. Exod. 29:45. 9. Deut. 33:16.
10. Literally: each place according to itself.

CHAPTER 26

You know their dictum that refers in inclusive fashion to all the kinds of interpretation connected with this subject, namely, their saying: *The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man.*[1] The meaning of this is that everything that all men are capable of understanding and representing to themselves at first thought has been ascribed to Him as necessarily belonging to God, may He be exalted. Hence attributes indicating corporeality have been predicated of Him in order to indicate that He, may He be exalted, exists, inasmuch as the multitude cannot at first conceive of any existence save that of a body alone; thus that which is neither a body nor existent in a body does not exist in their opinion. In a similar way one has ascribed to Him, may He be exalted, everything that in our opinion[2] is a perfection in order to indicate that He is perfect in every manner of perfection and that no deficiency whatever mars[3] Him. Thus none of the things apprehended by the multitude as a deficiency or a privation are predicated of Him. Hence it is not predicated of Him that He eats, drinks, sleeps, is ill, does an injustice, or that He has any similar characteristic. On the other hand, everything that the multitude consider a perfection is predicated of Him, even if it is only a perfection in relation to ourselves – for in relation to Him, may He be exalted, all things that we consider perfections are the very extreme of deficiency. However, | if people imagined that this human perfection was lacking in Him, may He be exalted, this would constitute, in their opinion, a deficiency in Him. Thus you know that motion belongs to the perfection of a living being and is necessary to such a being for its perfection. For just as it requires eating and drinking in order to replace what has been dissolved, it also requires motion in order to direct itself toward what agrees with it and to escape from what disagrees. There is, accordingly, no difference between, on the one hand, predicating eating and drinking of God, may He be exalted, and, on the other, predicating movement of Him. However, in accordance with *the language of the sons of man*, I mean the imagination of the multitude, eating and drinking are considered in their opinion as a deficiency with reference to God, whereas motion is not considered as a deficiency with reference to Him; and this notwithstanding the fact that only need obliges recourse to motion. It has

1. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣi^{c}a, 31b.
2. Apparently that of men in general.
3. Literally: mingles with Him.

already been demonstrated that everything that is capable of motion is endowed with a magnitude that, without any doubt, can be divided. And it shall be demonstrated further on that He, may He be exalted, is not endowed with magnitude, and that in consequence motion does not pertain to Him, and that rest should not be predicated of Him either – for it can only be predicated of one who is characterized by the capacity for motion. All these terms indicative of various kinds of motions of living beings are predicated of God, may He be exalted, in the way that we have spoken of, just as life is predicated of Him. For motion is an accident attaching to living beings. There is no doubt that when corporeality is abolished, all these predicates are likewise abolished. I mean such terms as *to descend, to ascend, to go, to stand erect, to stand, to go round, to sit, to dwell, to go out, to come, to pass,* and all terms similar to these. To speak at length of this matter would be superfluous, were it not for the notions to which the minds of the multitude are accustomed. For this reason it behooves to explain the matter to those whose souls grasp at human perfection and, by dint of expatiating a little on the point in question just as we have done, to put an end to the fantasies that come to them from the age of infancy. |

CHAPTER 27

Onqelos the Proselyte was very perfect in the Hebrew and Syrian languages and directed his effort toward the abolition of the belief in God's corporeality. Hence he interprets in accordance with its meaning every attribute that Scripture predicates of God and that might lead toward the belief in corporeality. Thus whenever he encounters one of the terms indicative of one of the kinds of motion, he makes motion to mean the manifestation and appearance of a created light, I mean the *Indwelling* or the action of providence. Thus he renders, *The Lord will descend,*[1] by the words, *The Lord will manifest Himself; And the Lord descended,*[2] by the words, *And the Lord manifested Himself.* He does not translate: *And the Lord came down.* He also translates, *I will descend now and see,*[3] by, *I will manifest Myself now and see.* This occurs continually in his interpretation. However, he translates, *I will descend with thee into Egypt,*[4] by, *I will go*

1. Exod. 19:11. 2. Exod. 19:20. 3. Gen. 18:21. 4. Gen. 46:4.

down with thee to Egypt.[5] And this is a very marvellous story that indicates the perfection of this distinguished man as well as the fine quality of his interpretation and of his understanding of things as they really are. This translation also reveals to us an important matter regarding prophecy. For in the beginning of the story, Scripture says:[6] *And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob, and so on. And He said, I am God, and so on. I will descend with thee into Egypt.* Now in view of the fact that the beginning of the passage includes the statement that this happened *in the visions of the night,*[7] *Onqelos* did not think that it would be unseemly to conform wholly to the text in his rendering of what was said *in the visions of the night.* This was the correct procedure. For this passage contains a relation of what was said and not a relation of a story of such as is to be found in the verse: *And the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai.*[8] For that is a relation of what took place within matters having existence. On this account [Onqelos] uses in connection with this the term "manifestation" and discards in his rendering everything indicative of the existence of motion.[9] On the other hand, he left in his translation the things of the imagination —I mean the retelling of what was said to him—as they are according to the text. This is a marvellous thing. Through this your attention will be drawn to the fact that there is | a great difference between that which is said to happen[10] *in a dream* or *in the visions of the night,* that which is said to happen *in a vision* and *apparition,*[11] and that of which it is said without qualification:[12] *And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,* or, *And the Lord said unto me.* In my opinion it is also possible that *Onqelos* interpreted the word *God*[13] occurring here as signifying an angel, and that, on this account, he did not think it improper that he should have Him say: *I will go down with thee to Egypt.*[14] Do not think it unseemly that he should have believed that *God* means here an angel, though He says to him: *I am God, the God of thy father.*[15] For this is also said in the same terms by an angel. Do you not see that [Jacob] says: *And the angel of God said unto me in a dream: Jacob; and I said: Here am I;*[16] and that at the end of the relation of what he said to him you find the words: *I am the God of Bethel, where*

5. I.e., in this case Onqelos gives a literal translation of the Hebrew sentence.
6. Gen. 46:2–3. 7. Gen. 46:2. 8. Exod. 19:20.
9. Obviously motion in God is meant. 10. I.e., to Jacob.
11. Which are not said to have taken place in the night. The word *maḥazeh,* translated in the text as *apparition,* means etymologically *vision,* as does the word *mar'eh* (translated in the text as *vision*).
12. Literally: absolutely. 13. *Elohim.*
14. Gen. 46:4 is meant; the text is quoted in Aramaic.
15. Gen. 46:3. 16. Gen. 31:11.

thou didst anoint a pillar, and where thou didst vow a vow unto Me.[17] Now there is no doubt that *Jacob* made a vow to God and not to the angel. However, this happens continually in the dicta of the prophets, I mean the retelling of things told to them by an angel in the name of God as if God had spoken to them. In all of them there is an omission of the nomen regens. It is as though he who addresses the prophet said: *I am the messenger of the God of thy father; I am the messenger of God who appeared to thee in Bethel*, or used similar formulae.

Concerning prophecy and its degrees and concerning the angels, a lengthy exposition will be made in accordance with the purpose of this Treatise.

CHAPTER 28

Foot [*regel*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting a foot.[1] Thus: *Foot for foot.*[2] It also occurs with the meaning of following. Thus: *Go thee out and all the people that are in thy feet*[3]—the meaning of which is, that follow thee. It is likewise used in the sense of causation. Thus: *And the Lord hath blessed thee for my foot*[4]—I being the cause, that is to say, for my sake. For when a thing | exists for the sake of some other thing, the latter is the cause of the former. This meaning is frequently employed. Thus: *For the foot of the cattle that goeth before me and for the foot of the children.*[5] Accordingly when Scripture says: *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives*,[6] it signifies thereby the establishment of the things He has caused[7]—I mean of the wonders that will then become manifest at that place[8] and of which God, may He be exalted, is the cause, I mean the maker. This interpretation was adopted by *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him. He translates:[9] *And He will manifest Himself in His might on that day upon the Mount of Olives.* In a similar way he translates

17. Gen. 31:13.
1. I.e., the part of the body. Maimonides uses the Arabic word to explain the Hebrew term of which he treats.
2. Exod. 21:24. 3. Exod. 11:8. 4. Gen. 30:30. 5. Gen. 33:14.
6. Zech. 14:4.
7. Literally: the establishment of His causes. The word *sabab*, "cause," is sometimes used by Maimonides in the sense of "effect."
8. I.e., on the Mount of Olives.
9. Literally: said. Jonathan translated the Bible into Aramaic.

every part of the body having the function of grasping or moving by the terms *His might*, for all of them are intended to signify actions proceeding from God's will. Now as for its dictum: *And there was under his feet, as it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone.*[10] The interpretation of *Onqelos* is, as you know, as follows. He considers that the third person suffix, "his,"[11] in the words *his feet* refers to God's *throne*; accordingly he translates: *And under the throne of His glory*. Understand this and admire how far *Onqelos* was from belief in the corporeality of God and from everything that leads to it even though it be by the longest way. For he does not say: *And under His throne*. For should the term *throne* have been referred to God in the sense that has been explained above, this would have entailed the consequence that He would have been conceived of as sitting upon a body and thus would have entailed the belief in corporeality. Accordingly [Onqelos] referred the term *throne* to *His glory*, I mean to the *Indwelling*,[12] which is a created light. Similarly he renders in his *translation* the verse: *For my hand upon the throne of the Lord*,[13] as: *From God whose Indwelling is on the throne of glory*. And in a similar way you find on the tongue of the whole nation the words: *the throne of glory*.

We have gone beyond the subject of the chapter in order to deal with a matter that will be made clear in other chapters. I shall now return to the subject of this chapter. As for the interpretation of *Onqelos*, you already know it. However, the final end of the matter[14] consists in the rejection of the doctrine of the corporeality of God. He does not explain to us what they apprehended[15] and what is intended by this parable. He acts in a similar way in all other passages; that is to say, he is not concerned with such significations, | but only with the rejection of the doctrine of the corporeality of God. For this rejection is a matter of demonstration and is necessary in belief.[16] Therefore he made a decision about it and translated accordingly. On the other hand the explanation of the meaning of parables is a suppositious matter, for their intention may be this or that. They are also most hidden matters, and it is not a part of the foundations of belief[17] to understand them, nor are they easily grasped by the multitude. Hence [Onqelos] did not concern himself with their signification.

As for us, it certainly is incumbent upon me in accordance with the purpose of this Treatise to interpret something of this parable. I shall

10. Exod. 24:10. 11. In Hebrew "his" is a third person possessive suffix.
12. *shekhinah*. 13. Exod. 17:16.
14. I.e., the end with a view to which Onqelos makes this translation.
15. I.e., Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel, mentioned in Exod. 24:9.
16. I.e., religious belief. 17. I.e., religious belief.

accordingly say that when it says, *under His feet*, it intends to signify: He being the cause and because of Him, as we have already explained. For what they apprehended[18] was the true reality of first matter, which derives from Him, may He be exalted, He being the cause of its existence. Consider its dictum: *As it were, a work of the whiteness of sapphire stone.* If the intended signification had been the color, it would have said: *As it were, the whiteness of sapphire stone.* The word *work* was added, because Matter, as you know, is always receptive and passive, if one considers its essence, and is not active except by accident. Form, on the other hand, is in its essence always active, as has been made clear in the books on natural science, and is passive only by accident. That is why Scripture applied to the first matter the expression: *as it were, a work.* As for the *whiteness of sapphire stone*, the expression is intended to signify transparency and not a white color. For the whiteness of a crystal[19] is not due to a white color, but solely to its transparency. And, as has been demonstrated in the books on natural science, transparency is not a color; for if it were a color, it would not let all the colors be seen behind it and would not receive all of them.[20] Now a transparent body receives all the colors in succession just because it lacks a color of its own. In this it resembles the first matter, which in respect of its true reality lacks all forms and on this account is capable of receiving all forms in succession. Accordingly | their apprehension[21] had as its object the first matter and the relation of the latter to God, inasmuch as it is the first among the things He has created that necessitates generation and corruption; and God is its creator ex nihilo.[22] A disquisition on this notion will come further on.[23] Know that you require such an interpretation even according to the interpretation of *Onqelos*, who translates: *And under the throne of His glory.* I mean to say that the first matter is also in true reality under the heaven that is called the *throne.* A pointer to this marvellous[24] interpretation was only given to me by a dictum of *Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrqanos* that I came across. You will see it in one of the chapters of this Treatise.[25] The purpose of everyone endowed with intellect should be wholly directed to rejecting corporeality with respect to God, may He be exalted, and to considering all these apprehensions as intellectual, not sensory. Understand this and reflect on it.

18. I.e., Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel.
19. *billūr.* The use of this Arabic word may mean that Maimonides considered that the Hebrew word *sappir* (sapphire) meant "crystal."
20. I.e., receive its coloring from them.
21. That of Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel.
22. *mubdi'uhā.* The Arabic word generally connotes a creator ex nihilo, but it is less explicit than this Latin-English expression.
23. Cf. II 26. 24. *gharīb.* The word generally means "strange." 25. Cf. II 26.

CHAPTER 29

Sorrow [*ʿeṣeb*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting pain and aching: *In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.*[1] It is also a term denoting anger: *And his father had not caused him to be sorry at any time,*[2] which means that he had not angered him. *For he was sorrowful for the sake of David;*[3] he was angry for his sake. The term also denotes contrariety and disobedience: *They rebelled and caused sorrow to His holy spirit;*[4] *And cause Him sorrow in the desert;*[5] *If there be in me any way of causing sorrow;*[6] *Every day they cause sorrow*[7] *to my words.*[8] In accordance with the second or third sense it is said: *He*[9] *sorrowed unto His heart,*[10] In accordance with the second sense, the interpretation of the verse would be that God was angry with them[11] because of their evil action. As for Scripture saying, *unto his heart*, it uses a similar expression in the story of *Noah*, namely: *And God said unto His heart.*[12] Hear its meaning. The matter with regard to which it is said of | a man that he *said in his heart* or *said unto his heart* is a matter to which that man does not give utterance and that he does not tell to somebody else. Similarly it is said of every matter willed by God of which He does not speak to a prophet at the time when He accomplished an act corresponding to His will in this regard: *God said unto His heart.* It is thus likened to the human matter in virtue of the continual use of the rule: *The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man.*[13] This is clear and manifest. Inasmuch as it is not made clear in the *Torah* with regard to the disobedience of *the generation of the flood* that an envoy of God was sent to them at that time, nor that prohibitions were imposed on them and that they were threatened with destruction, it is said of them that God was angry with them *in His heart.* Similarly in regard to His will that there should not be another *flood.* He did not say to a prophet at that time: Go and inform them of this. For this reason it is said: *unto His heart.* As for the interpretation of the passage, *He sorrowed unto His heart*, according to the third sense, its meaning[14] would be as follows: man went

1. Gen. 3:16. 2. I Kings 1:6. 3. I Sam. 20:34.
4. Isa. 63:10. 5. Ps. 78:40. 6. Ps. 139:24.
7. I.e., disobey. 8. Ps. 56:6. 9. God. 10. Gen. 6:6.
11. With Adam and Eve. 12. Gen. 8:21.
13. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣiʿa, 31b.
14. Literally: its interpretation. But the word used in Arabic is not the one occurring at the beginning of the sentence.

contrary to the will of God regarding him. For the term *heart* is also used to designate the will, as we shall make clear when treating of the equivocality of the term *heart*.[15]

CHAPTER 30

To *eat* [*'akhol*]. The first meaning given to this word in the Hebrew language signifies the taking of food by living beings. This does not require an example. Subsequently the Hebrew language saw two notions in the action of eating. One of them was the destruction and disappearance of the thing eaten, I mean the corruption of its form that first takes place. The other notion is that of the growth of the living being due to the food he takes, the continuance of his life[1] due to it, and the duration of the existence, as well as the good condition, of all the forces of his body, likewise due to it. In accordance with | the one notion, the *term eating* is figuratively applied to all destruction and undoing and, in general, to all putting-off of a form. Thus: *And the land of your enemies shall eat you up;*[2] *A land that eateth up its inhabitants;*[3] *Ye shall be eaten by the sword;*[4] *Shall the sword eat;*[5] *And the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and ate them up that were in the uttermost part of the camp.*[6] *He*[7] *is a fire that eateth,*[8] which means that He destroys those who disobey Him as a fire destroys that which is in its power. This use of the word is frequent. In accordance with the last notion, the *term eating* is applied figuratively to knowledge, learning, and, in general, the intellectual apprehensions through which the permanence[9] of the human form endures in the most perfect of states, just as the body endures through food in the finest of its states. Thus: *Come ye, buy and eat;*[10] *Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good;*[11] *It is not good to eat much honey;*[12] *My son, eat thou honey, for it is good, and the honeycomb is sweet to thy taste; so know thou wisdom to be unto thy soul.*[13] This use is also frequent in the speech of the *Sages*, I mean the

15. Cf. I 39.
1. Literally: of his remaining. *baqā'* in Arabic. 2. Lev. 26:38.
3. Num. 13:32. 4. Isa. 1:20. 5. II Sam. 2:26. 6. Num. 11:1.
7. I.e., God. 8. Deut. 4:24.
9. Or: the remaining. In Arabic the same word is used as that referred to in n. 1, this chap.
10. Isa. 55:1. 11. Isa. 55:2. 12. Prov. 25:27. 13. Prov. 24:13–14.

designation of knowledge as eating. Thus: *Come, eat fat meat at the house of Raba.*[14] They have also said: *All eating and drinking referred to in this book*[15] *signify wisdom exclusively,*[16] or, according to some copies, *the Torah.* Similarly they[17] often designate knowledge as water. Thus: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye for water.*[18] Inasmuch as this use has become so frequent and widespread in the Hebrew language that it has become, as it were, the first meaning,[19] the words meaning hunger and thirst are likewise employed to designate lack of knowledge and of apprehension. Thus: *I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord;*[20] *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.*[21] This use is frequent. *Jonathan ben Uziel*, peace be on him, translates[22] the verse, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,*[23] by the words: *With joy shall you receive a new teaching from the chosen of the righteous.* Consider accordingly | that he interprets the word *water* as being the knowledge that will be received in those days. And he takes the Hebrew word for *wells*—*maʿyene*—to be the equivalent of *meʿeyne haʿedah*;[24] I mean thereby the notables[25] who are the men of knowledge. And he[26] says: *From the chosen of the righteous*, as *righteousness* is true *salvation.* See accordingly how he interprets every word in this *verse* with a view to the notion of knowledge and learning. Understand this.

14. B.T., Baba Bathra, 22a. 15. The Ecclesiast.
16. Midrash Qoheleth, 3:13. According to the present text of this Midrash, when the Ecclesiast speaks of eating, he refers solely to the Torah and to good works.
17. As the example in the following sentence shows, the third plural used in this passage refers to Scripture, and not or not only to the talmudic Sages.
18. Isa. 55:1.
19. The Arabic word used here signifies "conventional meaning."
20. Amos 8:11. 21. Ps. 42:3. 22. Into Aramaic. 23. Isa. 12:3.
24. Literally: *from the important people of the community.* The word *meʿeyne*—which, if the vocalization is not taken into account, is written in Hebrew in the same way as *maʿyane* (sources)—means "from the eyes," "from the sources," and (as Maimonides interprets it) "from the notables." Num. 15:24.
25. *al-aʿyān.* This Arabic term derives from the same root as the Hebrew word in question (see preceding note) and has the same range of meanings.
26. Jonathan ben Uziel.

CHAPTER 31

Know that the human intellect has objects of apprehension that it is within its power and according to its nature to apprehend. On the other hand, in that which exists[1] there also are existents and matters that, according to its nature, it is not capable of apprehending in any way or through any cause;[2] the gates of their apprehension are shut before it. There are also in that which exists things of which the intellect may apprehend one state while not being cognizant of other states. The fact that it apprehends does not entail the conclusion that it can apprehend all things—just as the senses have apprehensions but it is not within their power to apprehend at whatever distance the objects of apprehension may happen to be. Similarly with regard to all other bodily faculties, for the fact that a man is able to carry two hundred-weights does not mean that he is able to carry ten. The difference in capacity existing between the individuals of the species[3] with regard to sensory apprehensions and all the other bodily faculties is manifest and clear to all men. However, it has a limit, inasmuch as these capacities[4] cannot attain to every distance however far away nor to every degree however great it may happen to be. The identical rule obtains with regard to human intellectual apprehensions. There are great differences in capacity between the individuals of the species. This also is manifest and very clear to the men of knowledge. It may thus happen that whereas one individual discovers a certain notion by himself through his speculation, another individual | is not able ever to understand that notion. Even if it were explained to him for a very long time by means of every sort of expression and parable, his mind would not penetrate to it in any way, but would turn back without understanding it. This difference in capacity is likewise not infinite, for man's intellect indubitably has a limit at which it stops. There are therefore things regarding which it has become clear to man that it is impossible to apprehend them. And he will not find that his soul longs for knowledge of them, inasmuch as he is aware of the

1. The Arabic word *wujūd*, which usually means "existence," is often used by Maimonides with the meaning "that which exists" or "the totality of that which exists." In the text to which this note refers, the word seems to have the latter meaning.
2. *sabab*. In Maimonides' peculiar use of the term it may also mean "effect."
3. The Arabic word *al-nawᶜ* (the species), most probably but not quite certainly, refers in this passage to only the human species.
4. Literally: and the matter. These words may refer to the capacities or to their difference. The meaning in any case remains practically identical.

impossibility of such knowledge and of there being no gate through which one might enter in order to attain it. Of this nature is our ignorance of the number of the stars of heaven and whether that number is even or odd, as well as our ignorance of the number of the species of living beings, minerals, plants, and other similar things.

On the other hand, there are things for the apprehension of which man will find that he has a great longing. The sway of the intellect endeavoring to seek for, and to investigate, their true reality exists at every time and in every group of men engaged in speculation. With regard to such things there is a multiplicity of opinions, disagreement arises between the men engaged in speculation, and doubts crop up; all this because the intellect is attached to an apprehension of these things, I mean to say because of its longing for them; and also because everyone thinks that he has found a way by means of which he will know the true reality of the matter. Now it is not within the power of the human intellect to give a demonstration of these matters. For in all things whose true reality is known through demonstration there is no tug of war and no refusal to accept a thing proven — unless indeed such refusal comes from an ignoramus who offers a resistance that is called resistance to demonstration.[5] Thus you can find groups of people who dispute the doctrine that the earth is spherical and that the sphere has a circular motion[6] and with regard to other matters of this kind. These folk do not enter into our purpose. The things about which there is this perplexity are very numerous in divine matters, few in | matters pertaining to natural science, and nonexistent in matters pertaining to mathematics.

Alexander of Aphrodisias[7] says that there are three causes of disagreement about things. One of them is love of domination and love of strife, both of which turn man aside from the apprehension of truth as it is. The second cause is the subtlety and the obscurity of the object of apprehension in itself and the difficulty of apprehending it. And the third cause is the ignorance

5. Literally: demonstrational resistance.
6. *wa-kawn al-falak mustadīran.* Ibn Tibbon translates: and that the sphere is round. The difference between his translation and that proposed above is due to the fact that the word *mustadīr* means both "round" and "turning about." In this case the latter meaning seems more appropriate.
7. Cf. Translator's Introduction on the influence of this Greek commentator of Aristotle on Maimonides. The passage quoted by Maimonides occurs in a work of Alexander on "The Principles of the All according to the opinion of Aristotle" ("Maqālah fi'l-qawl fī mabādi' al-kull ʿalā raʾy Aristāṭālīs al-faylasūf," ed. A. Badawi, in: *Arisṭū ʿinda'l-ʿArab* [Cairo, 1947], pp. 253–77). This treatise is preserved only in an Arabic translation. There are only slight differences between Maimonides' quotation and the text published by Badawi (*loc. cit.*, p. 276, ll. 18–21).

of him who apprehends and his inability to grasp things that it is possible to apprehend. That is what Alexander mentioned. However, in our times there is a fourth cause that he did not mention because it did not exist among them. It is habit and upbringing. For man has in his nature a love of, and an inclination for, that to which he is habituated. Thus you can see that the people of the desert – notwithstanding the disorderliness of their life, the lack of pleasures, and the scarcity of food – dislike the towns, do not hanker after their pleasures, and prefer the bad circumstances to which they are accustomed to good ones to which they are not accustomed. Their souls accordingly would find no repose in living in palaces, in wearing silk clothes, and in the enjoyment of baths, ointments, and perfumes. In a similar way, man has love for, and the wish to defend, opinions to which he is habituated and in which he has been brought up and has a feeling of repulsion for opinions other than those. For this reason also man is blind to the apprehension of the true realities and inclines toward the things to which he is habituated. This happened to the multitude with regard to the belief in His corporeality and many other metaphysical[8] subjects as we shall make clear. All this is due to people being habituated to, and brought up on, texts that it is an established usage to think highly of and to regard as true and whose external meaning is indicative of the corporeality of God and of other imaginings with no truth in them, for these have been set forth as parables and riddles. This is so for reasons | that I shall mention further on.

Do not think that what we have said with regard to the insufficiency of the human intellect and its having a limit at which it stops is a statement made in order to conform to Law.[9] For it is something that has already been said and truly grasped by the philosophers without their having concern for a particular doctrine or opinion. And it is a true thing that cannot be doubted except by an individual ignorant of what has already been demonstrated. We have put this chapter before others only with a view to its serving as an introduction to that which shall come after it.

8. Or: divine – which is the literal meaning of the Arabic term used.
9. Literally: a speech said according to [religious] Law.

CHAPTER 32

You[1] who study my Treatise, know that something similar to what happens to sensory apprehensions happens likewise to intellectual apprehensions in so far as they are attached to matter. For when you see with your eye, you apprehend something that is within the power of your sight to apprehend. If, however, your eyes are forced to do something they are reluctant to do – if they are made to gaze fixedly and are set the task of looking over a great distance, too great for you to see, or if you contemplate very minute writing[2] or a minute drawing[3] that is not within your power to apprehend – and if you force your eye, in spite of its reluctance, to find out the true reality of the thing, your eye shall not only be too weak to apprehend that which you are unable to apprehend, but also too weak to apprehend that which is within your power to apprehend. Your eye shall grow tired, and you shall not be able to apprehend what you could apprehend before having gazed fixedly and before having been given this task. A similar discovery is made by everyone engaging in the speculative study of some science with respect to his state of reflection.[4] For if he applies himself to reflection and sets himself a task demanding his entire attention,[5] he becomes dull and does not then understand even that which is within his scope to understand. | For the condition of all bodily faculties is, in this respect, one and the same. Something similar can happen to you with regard to intellectual apprehensions. For if you stay your progress because of a dubious point; if you do not deceive yourself into believing that there is a demonstration with regard to matters that have not been demonstrated; if you do not hasten to reject and categorically to pronounce false any assertions whose contradictories have not been demonstrated; if, finally, you do not aspire to apprehend that which you are unable to apprehend – you will have achieved human perfection and attained the rank of *Rabbi Aqiba*, peace be on him, who *entered in peace and went out in peace*[6] when engaged in the theoretical study of these metaphysical[7] matters. If, on the other hand, you aspire to apprehend things that are beyond your apprehension; or if you hasten to pronounce false, assertions the contradictories of which have not been demonstrated or that are possible, though very

1. In the singular. 2. *khaṭṭ*. The word also means "line." 3. Or: painting.
4. Reflection (*tafakkur*) is a bodily faculty.
5. *khāṭir*, a term which may signify impulsions and thoughts which occur to an individual.
6. B.T., Ḥagigah, 14b. 7. Literally: divine.

remotely so—you will have joined *Elisha Aḥer*.[8] That is, you will not only not be perfect, but will be the most deficient among the deficient; and it shall so fall out that you will be overcome by imaginings and by an inclination toward things defective, evil, and wicked—this resulting from the intellect's being preoccupied and its light's being extinguished. In a similar way, various species of delusive imaginings are produced in the sense of sight when the visual spirit[9] is weakened, as in the case of sick people and of such as persist in looking at brilliant or minute objects.

In this regard it is said: *Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith and vomit it.*[10] In a similar way, the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, used this verse as a parable that they applied to *Elisha Aḥer*. How marvellous is this parable, inasmuch as it likens knowledge to eating, a meaning about which we have spoken.[11] It also mentions the most delicious of foods, namely, honey. Now, according to its nature, honey, if eaten to excess, upsets the stomach and causes vomiting. Accordingly Scripture says, as it were, that in spite of its sublimity, greatness, and what it has of perfection, the nature of the apprehension in question[12]— | if not made to stop at its proper limit and not conducted with circumspection—may be perverted into a defect, just as the eating of honey may. For whereas the individual eating in moderation is nourished and takes pleasure in it, it all goes if there is too much of it. Accordingly Scripture does not say, *Lest thou be filled therewith and loathe it*, but rather says, *and vomit it*. This notion is also referred to in Scripture in the dictum: *It is not good to eat much honey, and so on*,[13] as well as in the dictum, *Neither make thyself overwise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?*[14] It likewise refers to this in the dictum: *Guard thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and so on.*[15] This is also referred to by *David* in the dictum: *Neither do I exercise myself in things too great or in things too marvellous for me.*[16] The Sages too intended to express this notion in their dictum: *Do not inquire about things that are too marvellous for you; do not investigate what is hidden from you; inquire into things that are permitted to you; you have no business with marvels.*[17] This means that you should let your intellect move about only within the domain of things that man is able to grasp. For in regard to matters that it is not in the nature of man to grasp,

8. Literally: *Elisha the Other*.
9. A subtle corporeal substance supposed to transmit the images of objects seen by the eyes to the brain.
10. Prov. 25:16. 11. Literally: as we have said. Cf. I 30.
12. I.e., intellectual apprehension. 13. Prov. 25:27. 14. Eccles. 7:16.
15. Eccles. 4:17. 16. Ps. 131:1. 17. B.T., Hagigah, 13a.

it is, as we have made clear, very harmful to occupy oneself with them. This is what the Sages intended to signify by their dictum, *Whoever considers four things, and so on,*[18] completing the dictum by saying, *He who does not have regard for the honor of his Creator;* whereby they indicated what we have already made clear: namely, that man should not press forward to engage in speculative study of corrupt imaginings. When points appearing as dubious occur to him or the thing he seeks does not seem to him to be demonstrated, he should not deny and reject it, hastening to pronounce it false, but rather should persevere and thereby *have regard for the honor of his Creator.* He should refrain and hold back. This matter has already become clear. The intention of these texts set down by the prophets and the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* is not, however, wholly to close the gate of speculation and to deprive the intellect of the apprehension of things that it is possible to apprehend—as is thought by the ignorant and neglectful, who | are pleased to regard their own deficiency and stupidity as perfection and wisdom, and the perfection and the knowledge of others as a deficiency and a defection from Law, and who thus *regard darkness as light and light as darkness.*[19] Their purpose, in its entirety, rather is to make it known that the intellects of human beings have a limit at which they stop.

Do not criticize the terms applied to the intellect in this chapter and others. For the purpose here is to guide toward the intended notion and not to investigate the truth of the essence of the intellect; for other chapters are devoted to a precise account of this subject.[20]

CHAPTER 33

Know that to begin with this science is very harmful, I mean the divine science. In the same way, it is also harmful to make clear the meaning of the parables of the prophets and to draw attention to the figurative senses of terms used in addressing people, figurative senses of which the books of prophecy are full. It behooves rather to educate the young and to give firmness to the deficient in capacity according to the measure of their

18. B.T., Hagigah, 11b. The entire passage reads: *Whoever considers four things does not deserve to have come into the world, [namely, he who considers] what is above, what is below, what is in front, and what is behind.*

19. Isa. 5:20. 20. Cf. I 68 and 72.

apprehension. Thus he who is seen to be perfect in mind and to be formed for that high rank – that is to say, demonstrative speculation and true intellectual inferences – should be elevated step by step, either by someone who directs his attention or by himself, until he achieves his perfection. If, however, he begins with the divine science, it will not be a mere confusion in his beliefs that will befall him, but rather absolute negation.[1] In my opinion an analogous case would be that of someone feeding a suckling with wheaten bread and meat and giving him wine to drink. He would undoubtedly kill him, not because these aliments are bad or unnatural for man, but because the child that receives them is too weak to digest them so as | to derive a benefit from them. Similarly these true opinions were not hidden, enclosed in riddles, and treated by all men of knowledge with all sorts of artifice through which they could teach them without expounding them explicitly, because of something bad being hidden in them,[2] or because they undermine the foundations of Law, as is thought by ignorant people who deem that they have attained a rank suitable for speculation. Rather have they been hidden because at the outset the intellect is incapable of receiving them; only flashes of them are made to appear so that the perfect man should know them. On this account they are called *secrets and mysteries of the Torah*, as we shall make clear. This is the cause of the fact that the *Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man*, as we have made clear.[3] This is so because it[4] is presented in such a manner as to make it possible for the young, the women, and all the people to begin with it and to learn it. Now it is not within their power to understand these matters as they truly are. Hence they are confined to accepting tradition with regard to all sound opinions that are of such a sort that it is preferable that they should be pronounced true and with regard to all representations of this kind – and this in such a manner that the mind is led toward the existence of the objects of these opinions and representations but not toward grasping their essence as it truly is. When, however, a man grows perfect *and the mysteries of the Torah are communicated to him*[5] either by somebody else

1. The term *taʿṭīl* used by Maimonides may mean the emptying of the concept of God of all content, the denial of His having any action whatever, and so forth.
2. The Arabic text of Joel's edition (p. 48, l. 5) reads: *kawnihā fīhā* – which seems meaningless. On the other hand, Ibn Tibbon's translation seems to correspond to an Arabic text – *kawnin fīhā* – which makes better sense. In this case the English translation conforms to Ibn Tibbon's. The fact that the word *kawnihā* occurs in the same sentence a few words later may have caused *kawnin* to be miswritten *kawnihā*.
3. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣiʿa, 31b. Cf. I 26.
4. Namely, the Torah. 5. Cf. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a.

or because he himself discovers them[6] – inasmuch as some of them draw his attention to others –, he attains a rank at which he pronounces the above-mentioned correct opinions to be true; and in order to arrive at this conclusion, he uses the veritable methods,[7] namely, demonstration in cases where demonstration is possible or strong arguments where this is possible. In this way he represents to himself these matters, which had appeared to him as imaginings and parables, in their truth and understands their essence. Accordingly the following speech of the Sages has been repeated to you several times in our speech:[8] *The Account of the Chariot ought not to be taught even to one man, except if he be wise and able to understand by himself*, in which case *only the chapter headings may be transmitted to him.*[9] On this account one ought not to begin to teach this subject to anyone unless it be according to his capacity and then only under these two conditions; one of them | being that the one who is to be taught is *wise*, I mean that he has achieved knowledge of the sciences from which the premises of speculation derive; and the other, that he be full of understanding, intelligent, sagacious by nature, that he divine a notion even if it is only very slightly suggested to him in a flash. This is the meaning of the dictum of the Sages: *able to understand by himself.*

I shall make clear to you the cause[10] that prevents the instruction of the multitude in the veritable methods of speculation and that prevents their being taught to begin to grasp the essences of things as they are. I shall also explain to you that it is requisite and necessary that this should not be otherwise than thus. These explanations shall be made in the chapter following upon the present one. I shall then say:

CHAPTER 34

The causes that prevent the commencement of instruction with divine science, the indication of things that ought to be indicated, and the presentation of this to the multitude, are five.

The first cause is the difficulty, subtlety, and obscurity of the matter

6. Literally: either from someone other than he or from himself.
7. Literally: he pronounces these correct opinions to be true in virtue of the veritable methods for pronouncing a thing true.
8. Cf. I Introduction. 9. B.T., Hagigah, 11b, 13a.
10. In fact there are several causes, as is explained in the following chapter.

in itself. Thus Scripture says: *That which was is far off and exceeding deep; who can find it out?*[1] And it is said: *But wisdom, where shall it be found?*[2] Now it is not fitting in teaching to begin with what is most difficult and obscure for the understanding. One of the parables generally known in our community is that likening knowledge to water. Now the Sages, peace be on them, explained several notions by means of this parable; one of them being that he who knows how to swim brings up pearls from the bottom of the sea, whereas he who does not know, drowns. For this reason, no one should expose himself to the risks of swimming except he who has been trained in learning to swim.

The second cause is the insufficiency of the minds of all men at their beginnings. For man is not granted his ultimate perfection at the outset; for perfection exists in him only potentially, and in his beginnings he | lacks this act. Accordingly it is said: *And man is born a wild ass.*[3] Nor is it necessarily obligatory in the case of every individual who is endowed with some thing in potency, that this thing should become actual. Sometimes it remains in its defective state either because of certain obstacles or because of paucity of training in what transforms that potentiality into actuality. Accordingly it is clearly said: *Not many are wise.*[4] The Sages too, *may their memory be blessed,* have said: *I saw the people who have attained a high rank,*[5] *and they were few.*[6] For the obstacles to perfection are very many, and the objects that distract from it abound. When should he be able to achieve the perfect preparation and the leisure required for training so that what subsists in a particular individual in potency should be transformed into actuality?

The third cause lies in the length of the preliminaries. For man has in his nature a desire to seek the ends;[7] and he often finds preliminaries tedious and refuses to engage in them. Know, however, that if an end could be achieved without the preliminaries that precede it, the latter would not be preliminaries, but pure distractions and futilities. Now if you would awaken a man—even though he were the dullest of all people—as one awakens a sleeping individual, and if you were to ask him whether he desired at that moment to have knowledge of the heavenly spheres,[8] namely, what their number is and what their configuration, and what is contained in them, and what the angels are, and how the world as a whole

1. Eccles. 7:24. 2. Job 28:12. 3. Job 11:12. 4. Job 32:9.
5. Literally: *I saw the sons of elevation.*
6. B.T., Sukkah, 45b; B.T., Sanhedrin, 97b.
7. Here in the sense of objects with a view to which an act may be accomplished.
8. Literally: of these heavens.

was created, and what its end is in view of the arrangement of its various parts with one another, and what the soul is, and how it is created in time[9] in the body, and whether the human soul can be separated from the body, and, if it can, in what manner and through what instrument and with what distinction in view, and if you put the same question to him with regard to other subjects of research of this kind, he would undoubtedly answer you in the affirmative. He would have a natural desire to know these things as they are in truth; but he would wish this desire to be allayed, and the knowledge of all this to be achieved by means of one or two words that you would say to him. If, however, you would lay upon him the obligation to abandon | his occupation for a week's time until he should understand all this, he would not do it, but would be satisfied with deceptive imaginings through which his soul would be set at ease. He would also dislike being told that there is a thing whose knowledge requires many premises and a long time for investigation. You know that these matters are mutually connected; there being nothing in what exists besides God, may He be exalted, and the totality of the things He has made. For this totality includes everything comprised in what exists except only Him. There is, moreover, no way to apprehend Him except it be through the things He has made; for they are indicative of His existence and of what ought to be believed about Him, I mean to say, of what should be affirmed and denied with regard to Him. It is therefore indispensable to consider all beings as they really are so that we may obtain for all the kinds of beings true and certain premises that would be useful to us in our researches pertaining to the divine science. How very many are the premises thus taken from the nature of numbers and the properties of geometrical figures from which we draw inferences concerning things that we should deny with respect to God, may He be exalted! And this denial is indicative to us of many notions. As for the matters pertaining to the astronomy of the spheres and to natural science, I do not consider that you should have any difficulty in grasping that those are matters necessary for the apprehension of the relation of the world to God's governance as this relation is in truth and not according to imaginings. There are also many speculative subjects that, although no premises can be obtained from them for the use of this science, nevertheless train the mind and procure it the habitus of drawing inferences and knowledge of the truth in matters pertaining to its essence. They also put an end to the confusion in most of the minds of those engaged in speculation, a

9. *ḥudūth*, the Arabic term used, may mean "happening" or "taking place in time."

confusion mistaking things that are accidental for those that are essential;[10] hereby an end is also put to the perversion of opinions arising out of this confusion. All this is achieved in addition to the representation of these | subjects as they really are, even if they in no way belong to the divine science. These subjects are also not devoid of utility in other points, namely, with respect to matters that lead up to that science. Accordingly it is certainly necessary for whoever wishes to achieve human perfection to train himself at first in the art of logic, then in the mathematical sciences according to the proper order, then in the natural sciences, and after that in the divine science. We find many people whose mind stops short at one of these sciences; and sometimes even if their mind does not miss the mark, they are cut off by death while engaged in some preliminary study. Accordingly if we never in any way acquired an opinion through following traditional authority and were not correctly conducted toward something by means of parables, but were obliged to achieve a perfect representation by means of essential definitions and by pronouncing true only that which is meant to be pronounced true in virtue of a demonstration—which would be impossible except after the above-mentioned lengthy preliminary studies—this state of affairs would lead to all people dying without having known whether there is a deity for the world, or whether there is not, much less whether a proposition should be affirmed with regard to Him or a defect denied. Nobody would ever be saved from this perdition except *one of a city or two of a family.*[11] As for the few solitary individuals[12] that are *the remnant whom the Lord calls,*[13] the perfection, which constitutes the end to be aimed at, is realized for them only after the above-mentioned preliminary studies. *Solomon* has made it clear that the need for preliminary studies is a necessity and that it is impossible to attain true wisdom except after having been trained. For he says: *If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but even more preparation is needed for wisdom;*[14] and he also says: *Hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.*[15] There is also a necessity of another kind for achieving knowledge of the preliminary studies. | It arises from the fact that when a man seeks to obtain knowledge quickly, many doubts occur to him, and he moreover quickly understands objections—I mean to say the destruction of a particular doctrine, this being similar to the demolition of a building. Now the establishment of doctrines as true and the solution of doubts can

10. Literally: that are of its essence. Namely, of the essence of the mind.
11. Jer. 3:14. 12. *al-āḥād.* Literally: ones or units. 13. Cf. Joel 3:5.
14. Eccles. 10:10 15. Prov. 19:20.

only be grounded upon many premises taken from these preliminary studies. One engaged in speculation without preliminary study is therefore comparable to someone who walked on his two feet in order to reach a certain place and, while on his way, fell into a deep well without having any device to get out of there before he perishes. It would have been better for him if he had foregone walking and had quietly remained in his own place. In *Proverbs*, *Solomon* describes at length the state of lazy people and their incapacity—all this being a parable for the incapacity to seek knowledge of the sciences. Thus speaking of the desire of someone desirous to achieve his ends, but making no effort to achieve knowledge of the preliminary studies leading up to these ends does nothing else but desire, he says: *The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not.*[16] In these verses he says that the reason why the desire of the slothful kills him is to be found in the fact that he makes no effort and does not work with a view to that which would allay that desire; he has only an abundance of longing and nothing else, while he aspires to things for whose achievement he lacks the necessary instrument. It would be healthier for him if he renounced this desire. Consider now how the ending of the parable explains its beginning. For in his dictum, *But the righteous giveth and spareth not*, the word *righteous* is not antithetical to *slothful* except according to the explanation we have propounded. For [Solomon] says that the just one among men is he who gives everything its due; he means thereby that he gives all his time to seeking knowledge and spares no portion of his time for anything else. He says, as it were: *But the righteous gives his days to wisdom and is not sparing of them;* which corresponds to his saying: *Give not thy strength unto women.*[17] Now the majority | of the men of knowledge, I mean those generally known as men of knowledge, labor under this disease—I mean that which consists in seeking to achieve the ends and in speaking about them without having engaged in the studies preliminary to them. With some of them, their ignorance or their desire to have the first place goes so far as to cause them to disapprove of these preliminary studies, which they are incapable of grasping or are too lazy to seek to understand. Accordingly they wish to show that these studies are harmful or useless. However, when one reflects, the truth of the matter is clear and manifest.[18]

The fourth cause is to be found in the natural aptitudes. For it has been explained, or rather demonstrated, that the moral virtues are a prepara-

16. Prov. 21:25–26. 17. Prov. 31:3.
18. Literally: And the truth in contemplating is clear and manifest.

tion for the rational[19] virtues, it being impossible to achieve true, rational acts[20]—I mean perfect rationality—unless it be by a man thoroughly trained with respect to his morals and endowed with the qualities of tranquillity and quiet. There are, moreover, many people who have received from their first natural disposition a complexion of temperament[21] with which perfection is in no way compatible. Such is the case of one whose heart is naturally exceedingly hot; for he cannot refrain from anger, even if he subject his soul to very stringent training. This is also the case of one whose testicles have a hot and humid temperament and are of a strong constitution and in whom the seminal vessels abundantly generate semen. For it is unlikely that such a man, even if he subject his soul to the most severe training, should be chaste. Similarly you can find among people rash and reckless folk whose movements, being very agitated and disordered, indicate a corruption of the complexion and a poor quality of the temperament, of which it is impossible to give an account. Perfection can never be perceived in such people. And to make an effort for their benefit in this matter is pure ignorance on the part of him who makes the effort. For this science, as you know, is not like the science of medicine[22] or the science of geometry, and not everyone has the disposition required for it in the various respects we have mentioned. It is accordingly indubitable that preparatory moral training should be carried out before beginning with this science, so that man should be in a state of | extreme uprightness and perfection; *For the perverse is an abomination to the Lord, but His secret is with the righteous.*[23] For this reason the teaching of this science to the young is disapproved of. In fact it is impossible for them to absorb it because of the effervescence of their natures and of their minds being occupied with the flame of growth. When, however, this flame that gives rise to perplexity is extinguished, the young achieve tranquillity and quiet; and their hearts submit and yield with respect to their temperament. They then may call upon their souls to raise themselves up to this rank, which is that of the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted; I mean thereby the divine science that is designated as the *Account of the Chariot.* Accordingly Scripture says: *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.*[24] And it says: *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a*

19. *nuṭqiyya.* The word from which this adjective derives means, like *logos* in Greek, both speech and reason.
20. *nuṭqiyyāt ḥaqīqiyya.* Literally: true rational things.
21. More or less literally: a temperamental disposition.
22. Literally: is not the science of medicine.
23. Prov. 3:32. 24. Ps. 34:19.

contrite and humble spirit, and so on.[25] For this reason they say in the *Talmud* with respect to the dictum of the [Sages of the Mishnah]: *The chapter headings may be transmitted to him; The chapter headings ought not to be transmitted except to a President of the Court, and one whose heart within him is full of care.*[26] The purpose of this is to signify obedience, submission, and great piety joined to knowledge. It is also said there: *The mysteries of the Torah may only be transmitted to a counsellor, wise in crafts, and endowed with understanding of whispering.*[27] Now these are matters that undoubtedly require a natural predisposition. Do you not know among various people one who is very feeble in point of opinion,[28] though he be the most understanding of men? Another, on the other hand, may have an unerring opinion and an excellent way of conducting affairs in political matters; such a one is called *counsellor*. However, someone of that sort might not understand an intelligible notion even though it were close to being one of the first intelligibles. He might be very stupid and lacking in ingenious devices. Thus it is said: *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?*[29] Among men there is also found one who is naturally full of understanding and perspicacity and capable of giving concise and coherent expression to the most hidden notions. Such a one is called *endowed with understanding of whispering*. However, someone of this sort does not necessarily occupy himself with, and achieve knowledge of, the sciences. The one who actually has achieved knowledge of the sciences | is called *wise in crafts*. Of him the Sages say: *When he speaks, they all become deaf.*[30] Consider how, by means of a text of a book,[31] they laid down as conditions of the perfection of the individual, his being perfect in the varieties of political regimes as well as in the speculative sciences and withal his possessing natural perspicacity and understanding and the gift of finely expressing himself in communicating notions in flashes. If all this is realized in someone, then *the mysteries of the Torah may be transmitted to him*. It is likewise said there:[32] *Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Rabbi Elazar: Come, so that I should teach you the Account of the Chariot! Whereupon [Rabbi Elazar] said to him: I am not yet old;*[33] he means: I am not yet aged and up to now find in myself the effervescence of

25. Isa. 57:15. 26. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a. 27. Or: incantation. B.T., Ḥagigah, 13a.
28. *raʾyʿ*, a term which here is the equivalent of the Greek *doxa*. 29. Prov. 17:16.
30. A pun arising from the resemblance between two Hebrew words: *hershim* (deaf) and *harashim* (in crafts). B.T., Ḥagigah, 14a.
31. *kitāb*. This Arabic word may sometimes, and in this case does, denote a book which has authority.
32. I.e., in the same text. 33. B.T., Ḥagigah, 14a.

nature and the recklessness of adolescence. See accordingly how they posed age as a condition superadded to the above-mentioned excellencies. How then could one plunge into these studies together with all the multitude, *the children, and the women?*

The fifth cause is to be found in the fact that men are occupied with the necessities of the bodies, which are the first perfection; and more particularly if, in addition, they are occupied with taking care of a wife and of children; and even more especially if there is in them, superadded to that, a demand for the superfluities of life, which becomes an established habitus as a result of a bad conduct of life and bad customs. Things are so that if even a perfect man, as we have mentioned, were to occupy himself much with these necessary things and all the more if he were to occupy himself with unnecessary things, and if his desire for them should grow strong, he would find that his theoretical desires had grown weak and had been submerged. And his demand for them would slacken and become intermittent and inattentive. He accordingly would not grasp things that otherwise would have been within his power to grasp; or else he would grasp them with a confused apprehension, a mixture of apprehension and failure to apprehend.

In view of all these causes, these matters are only for a few solitary individuals[34] of a very special sort, not for the multitude. For this reason, they should be hidden from the beginner, and he should be prevented from taking them up, just as | a small baby is prevented from taking coarse foods and from lifting heavy weights.

CHAPTER 35

Do not think that all that we have laid down in the preceding chapters regarding the greatness and the hidden nature of the matter, the difficulty of apprehending it, and its having to be withheld from the multitude, refers also to the denial of the corporeality of God and to the denial of His being subject to affections.[1] It is not so. For just as it behooves to bring up children in the belief, and to proclaim to the multitude, that God, may He be magnified and honored, is one and that none but He ought

34. *āḥād*. Cf. n. 12, this chap.

1. Regarded as exclusively passive. The Arabic word used is a noun deriving from the passive form of the verb "to act."

to be worshipped, so it behooves that they should be made to accept on traditional authority the belief that God is not a body; and that there is absolutely no likeness in any respect whatever between Him and the things created by Him; that His existence has no likeness to theirs; nor His life to the life of those among them who are alive; nor again His knowledge to the knowledge of those among them who are endowed with knowledge. They should be made to accept the belief that the difference between Him and them is not merely a difference of more and less, but one concerning the species of existence. I mean to say that it should be established in everybody's mind that our knowledge or our power does not differ from His knowledge or His power in the latter being greater and stronger, the former less and weaker,[2] or in other similar respects, inasmuch as the strong and the weak are necessarily alike with respect to their species, and one definition comprehends both of them. Similarly any relation can subsist only between two things belonging to one species.[3] This likewise has been made clear in the natural sciences. Now everything that can be ascribed to God, may He be exalted, differs in every respect from our attributes, so that no definition can comprehend the one thing and the other. Similarly, as I shall make clear, the term "existence" | can only be applied equivocally to His existence and to that of things other than He. This measure of knowledge will suffice for children and the multitude to establish in their minds that there is a perfect being, who is neither a body nor a force in a body, and that He is the deity, that no sort of deficiency and therefore no affection whatever can attain Him. As for the discussion concerning attributes and the way they should be negated with regard to Him; and as for the meaning of the attributes that may be ascribed to Him, as well as the discussion concerning His creation of that which He created, the character of His governance of the world, the "how" of His providence with respect to what is other than He, the notion of His will, His apprehension, and His knowledge of all that He knows; and likewise as for the notion of prophecy and the "how" of its various degrees, and the notion of His names, though they are many, being indicative of one and the same thing – it should be considered that all these are obscure matters. In fact, they are truly *the mysteries of the Torah* and the *secrets* constantly mentioned in the books of the prophets and in the dicta of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed.* They are the matters that

2. Literally: that our knowledge and His knowledge or our power and His power do not differ by the more and the less and the stronger and the weaker.

3. The use of the word *naw*ᶜ (species) in this passage is not very precise. Maimonides obviously had in mind the more comprehensive categories as well, that is to say, the genera.

ought not to be spoken of except *in chapter headings*, as we have mentioned, and only with an individual such as has been described.

On the other hand, the negation of the doctrine of the corporeality of God and the denial of His having a likeness to created things and of His being subject to affections are matters that ought to be made clear and explained to everyone according to his capacity and ought to be inculcated in virtue of traditional authority upon children, women, stupid ones, and those of a defective natural disposition, just as they adopt the notion that God is one, that He is eternal, and that none but He should be worshipped. For there is no profession of unity[4] unless the doctrine of God's corporeality is denied. For a body cannot be one, but is composed of matter and form, which by definition are two; it also is divisible, subject to partition. When people have received this doctrine, are habituated to and educated and grown up in it, and subsequently become perplexed over the texts of the books of the prophets, the meaning of these books should be explained to them. They should be elevated | to the knowledge of the interpretation of these texts, and their attention should be drawn to the equivocality and figurative sense of the various terms — the exposition of which is contained in this Treatise — so that the correctness of their belief regarding the oneness of God and the affirmation of the truth of the books of the prophets should be safe. If, however, someone's mind fails to understand the interpretation of the texts and the possibility of an identity of terms going together with a difference in meaning, he should be told: The interpretation of this text is understood by the men of knowledge. You, however, know that God, may He be honored and magnified, is not a body or subject to affections. For affection is a change, and He, may He be exalted, is not touched by change. He is not like unto any thing of all those that are other than He, nor is He comprehended together with one of these things in any definition whatever. You know likewise that these dicta of the prophets are true and have an interpretation. In dealing with such a man, one should stop at this measure of knowledge. But it is not meet that belief in the corporeality of God or in His being provided with any concomitant of the bodies should be permitted to establish itself in anyone's mind any more than it is meet that belief should be established in the nonexistence of the deity, in the association[5] of other gods with Him, or in the worship of other than He.

4. Literally: no unification. *tawḥīd* (unification) is a term applied to the belief, or the profession of faith, in One God.
5. The usual Arabic term for polytheism is employed.

CHAPTER 36

I shall explain to you, when speaking of the attributes, in what respect it is said that God is pleased with, or made angry and wrathful by, a certain thing. It is in this sense that it is said of certain individuals among men that God was pleased or angry with them or full of wrath. This notion is not the subject of this chapter—the subject being that which I am about to speak of.

Know that if you consider the whole of the *Torah* and all the books | of the prophets, you will find that the *expressions*, *wrath*, *anger*, and *jealousy*, are exclusively used with reference to *idolatry*. You will also find that the expressions, *enemy of God* or *adversary* or *hater*, are exclusively used to designate an *idolater*. Thus Scripture says: *And ye serve other gods, and so on, and the Lord's wrath will be kindled against you;*[1] *Lest the wrath of the Lord be kindled;*[2] *To provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands;*[3] *They have roused Me to jealousy with a no-god; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities, and so on;*[4] *For a jealous God, and so on;*[5] *Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images;*[6] *Because of the anger provoked by His sons and His daughters;*[7] *For a fire is kindled in My wrath;*[8] *For He will take vengeance on His adversaries and repay His enemies;*[9] *And repayeth them that hate Him;*[10] *Until He hath driven out His enemies;*[11] *Which the Lord thy God hateth;*[12] *For every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth.*[13] Expressions of this kind are too numerous to be counted. However, if you trace them in all the books, you will find that it is as we have said.

Now the books of the prophets[14] only make this strong assertion because it concerns a false opinion attaching to Him, may He be exalted, I refer to *idolatrous worship*. For the deviation from truth of one who believes that Zayd is standing at a time when he is sitting, is not like the deviation of him who believes that fire is under the air or water under the earth or that the earth is flat and other things of a similar kind. And this second deviation

1. Deut. 11:16–17. 2. Deut. 6:15. 3. Deut. 31:29. 4. Deut. 32:21.
5. Deut. 6:15. 6. Jer. 8:19. 7. Deut. 32:19. 8. Deut. 32:22.
9. Nah. 1:2. The biblical text is somewhat altered in Maimonides' quotation of this verse. In the first half, *He* is substituted for *the Lord*. In the second half, the correct biblical text is: *and reserveth wrath for His enemies*, whereas Maimonides cites the verse as reading: *and will repay His enemies*.
10. Deut. 7:10. 11. Num. 32:21. 12. Deut. 16:22. 13. Deut. 12:31.
14. I.e., the books of the Bible.

from truth is not like the deviation of him who believes that the sun consists of fire or that the heavenly sphere forms a hemisphere and other things of a similar kind. Again this third deviation from truth is not like the deviation of him who believes that the angels eat and drink and other things of a similar kind. Finally this fourth deviation from truth is not like the deviation of him who believes that a thing other than God ought to be worshipped. For whenever ignorance and infidelity[15] bear upon a great thing, I mean to say upon someone whose rank in what exists is well established, they are of greater consequence than if they bear upon someone | who was of a lower rank. By infidelity, I mean belief about a thing that is different from what the thing really is. By ignorance, I mean ignorance of what it is possible to know. Accordingly the ignorance of him who does not know the measure of the cone of a cylinder or does not know that the sun is spherical is not like the ignorance of him who does not know whether a deity exists or whether there is no deity for the world. Nor is the infidelity[16] of him who thinks that the cone of a cylinder is half a cylinder or that the sun is a circle like the infidelity of him who thinks that there are more deities than one.

Now you know that whoever performs *idolatrous worship* does not do it on the assumption that there is no deity except the idol. In fact, no human being of the past has ever imagined on any day, and no human being of the future will ever imagine, that the form that he fashions either from cast metal or from stone and wood has created and governs the heavens and the earth. Rather is it worshipped in respect of its being an image of a thing that[17] is an intermediary between ourselves and God. Scripture makes this clear, saying: *Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations, and so on.*[18] It also says: *And in every place incense is offered unto My name, and so on,*[19] whereby Scripture refers to what they regard as the First Cause. We have made this clear in our great compilation.[20] No one among the people of our

15. The word rendered by "infidelity" is *kufr*, a term whose usual meaning is approximately: disbelief in one or several principal religious dogmas. However, a few sentences farther on Maimonides explains that in his use of the word, *kufr* means an untrue belief about a thing. He does not indicate that the term in question is employed only in connection with beliefs related in some way to religion. Nevertheless, in view of the theological connotations of *kufr*, it seemed necessary to translate the word with a term deriving from the sphere of religious thought.
16. *kufr*. Cf. preceding note.
17. The Arabic pronoun translated by the relative pronoun "that" may refer either to "image" or to "thing." The second possibility is stylistically the more probable and is the one to which Ibn Tibbon's translation conforms.
18. Jer. 10:7. 19. Mal. 1:11.
20. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, ʿAbodah Zarah, I.

Law disputes this. However, in spite of the fact that those infidels[21] believe in the existence of the deity, their idolatrous worship entails their deserving destruction; for the reason that their infidelity bears upon a prerogative reserved to God alone, may He be exalted—I mean the prerogative of being worshipped and magnified—just as Scripture says: *And ye shall serve the Lord, and so on.*[22] This is so ordained in order that God's existence may be firmly established in the belief of the multitude. Now the idolaters thought that this prerogative belonged to that which was other than God; and this led to the disappearance of the belief in His existence, may He be exalted, from among the multitude. For the multitude grasp only the actions of worship, not their meanings or the true reality of the Being worshipped through them. Consequently the idolatrous worship of the infidels | entails their deserving destruction;[23] just as the text has it: *Thou shalt not save alive a soul.*[24] And it explains the reason for this, which is to put an end to this false opinion so that others should not be corrupted through it. As Scripture says: *That they teach you not to do, and so on.*[25] And it calls them *enemies*, *haters*, and *adversaries*, and says that he who does this *provokes* [God's] *jealousy, anger, and wrath.*

What then should be the state of him whose infidelity bears upon His essence, may He be exalted, and consists in believing Him to be different from what He really is? I mean to say that he does not believe that He exists; or believes that there are two gods, or that He is a body, or that he is subject to affections; or again that he ascribes to God some deficiency or other. Such a man is indubitably more blameworthy than *a worshipper of idols* who regards the latter as intermediaries or as having the power to *do good or ill.* Know accordingly, you who are that man, that when you believe in the doctrine of the corporeality of God or believe that one of the states of the body belongs to Him, you *provoke His jealousy and anger, kindle the fire of His wrath,* and are *a hater, an enemy, and an adversary* of God, much more so than *an idolater.* If, however, it should occur to you

21. *al-kāfirīn*, a participle deriving from the same root as *kufr*. Cf. n. 15, this chap.
22. Exod. 23:25.
23. Literally (as from twelve lines above): However, with these infidels believing in the existence of the deity, as their infidelity is attached to a right, which is to Him only, may He be exalted, I mean worship and magnification—just as it says: *And ye shall serve the Lord, and so on*—in order that His existence be firmly established in the belief of the multitude; and they thought that this right is to what is other than He. Accordingly this called for the privation of His existence, may He be exalted, from the belief of the multitude since the multitude apprehends only the actions of worship, not their meanings nor the true reality of the Worshipped through them. Accordingly this entailed their deserving destruction.
24. Deut. 20:16. 25. Deut. 20:18.

that one who believes in the corporeality of God should be excused because of his having been brought up in this doctrine or because of his ignorance and the shortcomings of his apprehension, you ought to hold a similar belief with regard to *an idolater*; for he only worships idols because of his ignorance or because of his upbringing: *They continue in the custom of their fathers.*[26] If, however, you should say that the external sense of the biblical text causes men to fall into this doubt, you ought to know that *an idolater* is similarly impelled to his idolatry by imaginings and defective representations. Accordingly there is no excuse for one who does not accept the authority of men who inquire into the truth and are engaged in speculation if he himself is incapable of engaging in such speculation. I do not consider as an infidel one who cannot demonstrate that the corporeality of God should be negated. But I do consider as an infidel one who does not believe in its negation; and this particularly in view of the existence of the interpretations of *Onqelos* and of *Jonathan* | *ben Uziel*, may peace be on both of them, who cause their readers to keep away as far as possible from the belief in the corporeality of God. This was the subject of this chapter.

CHAPTER 37

Face [*panim*] is an equivocal term, its equivocality being mostly with respect to its figurative use. It is the term designating the face of all living beings. Thus: *And all faces are turned into paleness;*[1] *Wherefore are your faces so sad.*[2] This use is frequent. It is also a term denoting anger. Thus: *And her face*[3] *was gone.*[4] The term is frequently used in this sense to denote the anger and wrath of God. Thus: *The face*[5] *of the Lord hath divided them;*[6] *The face*[7] *of the Lord is against them that do evil;*[8] *My face*[9] *shall go, and I will give thee rest;*[10] *Then I will set My face*[11] *against that man and his family.*[12] This use is frequent. It is also a term denoting the presence and station of an individual. Thus: *He settled in the face of all his brethren;*[13] *And in the face of all the people, I will be glorified*[14] —meaning, while they are present; *Surely he will blaspheme Thee to Thy face*[15] — meaning, while Thou art present and existent. In this sense it is said: *And*

26. B.T., Ḥullin, 13a.
1. Jer. 30:6. 2. Gen. 40:7. 3. I.e., the anger. 4. I Sam. 1:18.
5. I.e., the anger. 6. Lam. 4:16. 7. I.e., the anger. 8. Ps. 34:17.
9. I.e., My anger. 10. Exod. 33:14. 11. I.e., My anger. 12. Lev. 20:5.
13. Gen. 25:18. 14. Lev. 10:3. 15. Job 1:11.

the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face[16]—which means, as a presence to another presence without an intermediary, as is said: *Come, let us look one another in the face.*[17] Thus Scripture says: *The Lord spoke with you face to face.*[18] In another passage it explains, saying: *Ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no figure, only a voice.*[19] Hence this kind of speaking and hearing are described as being *face to face.* Similarly the words, *And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face,* describe His speaking as being in the form of an address.[20] Accordingly it is said: *Then he heard the voice speaking to him.*[21] It has accordingly been made clear to you that the hearing of a speech without the intermediary of an angel is described as being *face to face.* In this sense it is also said: *But My face shall not be seen,*[22] meaning that the true reality of My existence | as it veritably is cannot be grasped. *Face* is also an adverb of place that is rendered in Arabic by the words: "in front of thee"[23] or "in thy presence."[24] It is often used in this sense with regard to God, may He be exalted. Thus: *In the face*[25] *of the Lord.*[26] The biblical expression, *But My face shall not be seen,*[27] is understood in this sense in the interpretation of *Onqelos,* who translates: *And those in front of Me shall not be seen.* He indicates by this that there are likewise great created beings whom man cannot apprehend as they really are. These are the separate intellects. They have been thought to be in a relation to God as being constantly in front of Him and in His presence because of the power of the providence constantly watching over them. On the other hand, the things that in his opinion, I mean that of *Onqelos,* can be grasped in their true reality are such as are beneath the separate intellects with respect to their rank in that which exists. I mean things endowed with matter and form. Of them [Onqelos] has said: *And thou shalt see that which is behind Me.*[28] He means the beings from which I have, as it were, turned away, and upon which, speaking in parables, I have turned My back, because of their remoteness from the existence of God, may He be exalted. Further on you shall hear my interpretation of that which was demanded by *Moses our Master,* peace be on him. *Face* is also an adverb of time having the meaning: before or ancient.[29] Thus: *In the face in Israel;*[30] *In the face*[31] *Thou didst*

16. Exod. 33:11. 17. II Kings 14:8. 18. Deut. 5:4. 19. Deut. 4:12.
20. An address to Moses. 21. Num. 7:89. 22. Exod. 33:23. 23. *amāmaka.*
24. *bayna yadayka.* Literally: between your hands. 25. I.e., in front.
26. Gen. 18:22. 27. Exod. 33:23. 28. Ibid.; in Aramaic.
29. *qadīm.* In philosophic language the word means "eternal a parte ante," whereas its ordinary signification is "ancient."
30. Ruth 4:7. I.e., in the former time in Israel.
31. I.e., according to the explanation given in n. 29 above, either "of old" or "in the eternity a parte ante."

lay the foundation of the earth.[32] *Face* is also a term denoting protection and providence. Thus: *Thou shalt not bear the face of the poor;*[33] *And the honorable man;*[34] *Who does not bear the face.*[35] This use is frequent. In this sense it is also said: *The Lord bear His face*[36] *to thee and give thee peace,*[37] which refers to His making providence accompany us.

CHAPTER 38

Back [*ʾaḥor*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting the back.[1] Thus: *Over the back of the tabernacle;*[2] *The spear came out | at his back.*[3] Sometimes it is used as an adverb of time in the sense of: after. *Neither at the back of him*[4] *arose there any like him;*[5] *At the back of these things.*[6] This use is frequent. The term also occurs in the meaning of following and imitating the conduct of some individual with respect to the conduct of life. Thus: *Ye shall walk at the back of the Lord*[7] *your God;*[8] *They shall walk at the back of the Lord,*[9] which means following in obedience to Him and imitating His acts and conducting life in accordance with His conduct. Thus: *He walked at the back of a commandment.*[10] In this sense it is said: *And thou shalt see My back,*[11] which means that thou shalt apprehend what follows Me, has come to be like Me, and follows necessarily from My will—that is, all the things created by Me, as I shall explain in a chapter[12] of this Treatise.[13]

32. Ps. 102:26. 33. Lev. 19:15. I.e., thou shalt not respect the person of the poor.
34. Isa. 3:3. I.e., one who receives attention. 35. Deut. 10:17. I.e., show regard.
36. I.e., protect. 37. Num. 6:26.
1. The Arabic word is used to render the Hebrew term under discussion.
2. Exod. 26:12. 3. II Sam. 2:23. 4. I.e., after him. 5. II Kings 23:25.
6. Gen. 15:1. I.e., after these things. 7. I.e., after the Lord. 8. Deut. 13:5.
9. Hos. 11:10. I.e., after the Lord. 10. Hos. 5:11. I.e., after the commandment.
11. Exod. 33:23. 12. Or: in some of the chapters. 13. Cf. I 54.

CHAPTER 39

Heart [*leb*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting the heart,[1] I mean the part of the body in which resides the principle of life of every being endowed with a heart. Thus: *And thrust them in the heart of Absalom.*[2] And inasmuch as this part[3] is in the middle of the body, the term is used figuratively to designate the middle of every thing. Thus: *Unto the heart*[4] *of heaven;*[5] *The heart*[6] *of fire.*[7] It is also a term denoting thought. Thus: *Went not my heart,*[8] which means that thou wast present in my thought when this and that happened. In this sense it is said: *And that ye go not about after your own heart,*[9] which refers to your following your thoughts; and: *Whose heart turneth away this day,*[10] which means that his thought is discontinued. It is also a term signifying opinion. Thus: *All the rest of Israel were of one heart to make David king*[11]—that is, they were of one opinion. A similar meaning is to be found in the dictum: *But fools die for want of heart*[12]—which is intended to signify: through the deficiency of their opinion. And in the same way this meaning is to be found in the dictum: *My heart shall not turn away*[13] *so long as I live*[14]—the meaning of which is: my opinion shall not turn away from, and shall not let go of, this matter. For the beginning of this passage reads:[15] *My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go; My heart shall not turn away | so long as I live.* In my opinion it is with reference to this meaning of *yeḥeraph*[16] that the expression *shiphḥah neḥerephet le-ʾish*[17] [*a handmaid betrothed to a man*] is to be explained—[the term "neḥerephet"] being akin to an Arabic word, namely, "munḥarifa"[18] [turned away]—that is, one who turns from being possessed as a slave to being possessed as a wife. It [heart] is also a term

1. Here the Arabic word for "heart" is used. 2. II Sam. 18:14.
3. Literally: part of the body, or limb. 4. I.e., the middle. 5. Deut. 4:11.
6. I.e., midst. The Hebrew word *labba* occurring in this verse is usually interpreted as "flame."
7. Exod. 3:2. 8. II Kings 5:26. 9. Num. 15:39. 10. Deut. 29:17.
11. I Chron. 12:39. 12. Prov. 10:21.
13. The usual meaning of this Hebrew word is better rendered by the customary translation *shall not reproach* than by the one given in the text which accords with Maimonides' interpretation occurring in the next sentence. In giving this interpretation Maimonides uses the Arabic verb *inḥarafa* which appears to derive from the same root as the Hebrew word in question (*yeḥeraph*) and means "to turn away," "deviate."
14. Job 27:6.
15. Literally: for the first of this speech. Maimonides quotes the entire verse (Job 27:6) of which he has just quoted the second part.
16. Cf. n. 13, this chap. 17. Lev. 19:20. 18. Cf. n. 13, this chap.

denoting will. Thus: *And I will give you shepherds according to My heart;*[19] *Is thy heart right as my heart is?*[20]—that is, is thy will like my will in rectitude? Sometimes the word is figuratively applied with this meaning: *That shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My soul,*[21] the meaning of which is: he shall do according to My will; *And Mine eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually*[22]—that is, My providence and My will. It is also a term denoting the intellect. Thus: *But an empty man will act with his heart,*[23] meaning that he will cognize with his intellect. And similarly: *A wise man's heart is at his right hand*[24]—that is, his intellect is directed toward the perfect things. This use is frequent. It is in this sense —I mean that indicative of the intellect—that the term is applied figuratively to God in all the passages in question, save certain exceptional ones where it sometimes is used to indicate the will. Every passage should therefore be understood according to its context.[25] In this way [heart] is applied to the intellect in the verses: *And lay it to thy heart;*[26] *And none considereth in his heart;*[27] and all the others that are similar. In the same way Scripture says: *But the Lord hath not given you a heart to know,*[28] in a way analogous to its saying: *Unto thee it was shown that thou mightest know.*[29] As for the dictum of Scripture: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*[30]—in my opinion its interpretation is: with all the forces of your heart; I mean to say, with all the forces of the body, for the principle of all of them derives from the heart. Accordingly the intended meaning is, as we have explained in the Commentary on the *Mishnah*[31] and in *Mishneh Torah,*[32] that you should make His apprehension the end of all your actions.

19. Jer. 3:15. 20. II Kings 10:15. 21. I Sam. 2:35. 22. I Kings 9:3.
23. Job 11:12. The Hebrew text of the Bible has the verb *yelabbeb*, deriving from *leb* (heart). In the English translation of the Bible, the verb in this verse is rendered: *will get understanding.*
24. Eccles. 10:2. 25. Literally: every place according to itself. 26. Deut. 4:39.
27. Isa. 44:19. 28. Deut. 29:3. 29. Deut. 4:35. 30. Deut. 6:5.
31. Cf. *Eight Chapters* (*Shemonah Peraqim*), V. This is the introduction to Maimonides' commentary on the tractate Aboth.
32. Cf. Yesodei ha-Torah, II 2; De'oth, III 2.

CHAPTER 40

Air [*ruaḥ*][1] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting air; I mean the element that is one of | the four elements. Thus: *And the air of God hovered.*[2] It is also a term denoting the blowing wind. Thus: *And the east air*[3] *brought the locusts;*[4] *West air.*[5] This use of the term is frequent. It is also a term denoting the animal spirit. Thus: *An air*[6] *that passeth away and cometh not again;*[7] *Wherein is the air*[8] *of life.*[9] It is also a term denoting the thing that remains of man after his death and that does not undergo passing-away.[10] Thus: *And the air*[11] *shall return unto God who gave it.*[12] It is also a term denoting the divine intellectual overflow that overflows to the prophets and in virtue of which they prophesy, as we shall explain to you when speaking of prophecy, in the way in which it is proper to mention it in this Treatise. Thus: *And I will take of the air*[13] *which is upon thee, and I will put it upon them;*[14] *And it came to pass that when the air rested upon them;*[15] *The air*[16] *of the Lord spoke by me.*[17] This use of the word is frequent. It is also a term denoting purpose and will. Thus: *A fool uttereth all his air,*[18] his purpose and will. Similarly in the verse: *And the air of Egypt shall be made empty within it, and I will make void the counsel thereof;*[19] it says that [Egypt's] purposes will be divided and its governance will be hidden. Similarly also in the verse: *Who hath comprehended the air of the Lord, or who is familiar with His counsel that he may tell us?*[20] Scripture says that he who knows the ordering of His will or apprehends His governance of that which exists as it really is, should teach us about it—as we shall explain in the chapters that will deal with His governance.[21] In all cases in which the term *air* is applied to God, it is used in the fifth sense;

1. The Hebrew word *ruaḥ* usually means "wind" or "spirit." Here it is rendered by "air" because according to Maimonides this is the primary meaning of the word.
2. Gen. 1:2 3. I.e., wind.
4. Exod. 10:13. 5. Exod. 10:19. I.e., wind.
6. I.e., animal spirit. 7. Ps. 78:39.
8. I.e., animal spirit. 9. Gen. 7:15.
10. Corruption (*fasād*): the antithesis of generation.
11. The usual translation is "spirit." Maimonides may mean that in this context the word signifies the intellect.
12. Eccles. 12:7. 13. The usual translation is "spirit." 14. Num. 11:17.
15. Num. 11:25. The usual translation is "spirit."
16. The usual translation is "spirit."
17. II Sam. 23:2. 18. Prov. 29:11. 19. Isa. 19:3.
20. Isa. 40:13. 21. Cf. III 2.

in some of them also in the last sense, which is that of will, as we have explained. Thus the term should be interpreted in every passage according to what is indicated in the context.[22]

CHAPTER 41

Soul [*nephesh*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting the animal soul common | to every sentient being. Thus: *Wherein there is a living soul.*[1] And it is also a term denoting blood. Thus: *Thou shalt not eat the soul*[2] *with the flesh.*[3] It is also a term denoting the rational soul, I mean the form of man. Thus: *As the Lord liveth that made us this soul.*[4] And it is a term denoting the thing that remains of man after death. Thus: *Yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life.*[5] It is also a term denoting the will. Thus: *To bind his princes according to his soul,*[6] which means: through his will. Similarly: *And deliver not Thou him unto the soul of his enemies,*[7] which means: Thou will not deliver him to their will. In my opinion this is similar to: *If it be according to your soul to bury my dead,*[8] which means: if it be according to your purpose and will. And similarly: *Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My soul could not be toward this people,*[9] the meaning which is that I have no will toward them—that is, I do not wish that they endure. In all cases in which the term *soul* is applied to Him, may He be exalted, it has the meaning of will, as has already been set forth by us[10] with regard to the dictum of Scripture: *That shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My soul*[11]—the meaning of which is: in My will and purpose. One should interpret according to this sense the verse: *And His soul was grieved in the misery of Israel,*[12] which means that His will refrained from rendering *Israel* miserable. This *verse* was not translated at all by *Jonathan ben Uziel*, for he took it as using the term [soul] in its first sense, thought that he had met with a case of affection being ascribed to God, and accordingly refrained from translating[13] it. However, if the

22. Literally: that speech. The translation given in the text seems to be more probable than one referring the words, "that speech," to the present chapter of *The Guide of the Perplexed.*

1. Gen. 1:30. 2. I.e., the blood. 3. Deut. 12:23. 4. Jer. 38:16.
5. I Sam. 25:29. 6. Ps. 105:22. 7. Ps. 41:3. 8. Gen. 23:8.
9. Jer. 15:1. 10. Cf. I 39. 11. I Sam. 2:35. 12. Judg. 10:16.
13. Literally: interpreting.

term is taken in its last sense, the interpretation of the verse is very clear. For it is preceded by the statement that the providence of God, may He be exalted, had abandoned them so that they were perishing; and they implored God for help, but He did not help them. However, when they had gone far in repentance and their wretchedness had increased and the enemy had dominated them, He took pity on them; and His will refrained from letting their misery and wretchedness continue. Know this accordingly, for it is strange. In the words of Scripture: *in the misery of Israel*,[14] "in" is used instead of *from*. | It is therefore as if he said: *from the misery of Israel*. Many instances of this use [of "in"] have been enumerated by the linguists. Thus: *And that which remaineth in*[15] *the flesh and in*[16] *the bread;*[17] *Remains in*[18] *the years;*[19] *In the stranger and in the native of the land.*[20] This use is frequent.

CHAPTER 42

Living [*hay*] is a term denoting a being that grows and is sentient. Thus: *Every moving thing that liveth.*[1] It is also a term denoting recovery from a very severe illness. Thus: *And lived*[2] *from his illness;*[3] *In the camp till they lived.*[4] Similarly in the expression: *A living flesh.*[5] Similarly *death* [*maveth*] is a term denoting both death and severe illness. Thus: *And his heart died within him, and he became as a stone,*[6] which refers to the severity of his illness. On this account Scripture makes it clear with regard to *the son of the woman of Zarephath* – that *his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.*[7] For if it had said: *And he died*, it would have been possible to interpret this as meaning that it was a case of severe illness in which the sick individual was near death, as *Nabal* was, when he heard the news. Some[8] of the men of Andalusia[9] interpret the verse as meaning that his breath was suspended so that no breath at all could be perceived in him – as happens to people struck with apoplexy or with asphyxia deriving from the womb, so that it is not known if the one in question is dead or alive and the doubt remains a day or two. The term

14. Figuring in the verse under discussion. 15. Instead of: *from*.
16. Instead of: *from*. 17. Lev. 8:32. 18. Instead of: *from*. 19. Lev. 25:52.
20. Exod. 12:19. Instead of: *from the stranger and from the native of the land*.
1. Gen. 9:3. 2. I.e., was recovered. 3. Isa. 38:9
4. Josh. 5:8. I.e., was recovered. 5. Lev. 13:10. I.e., flesh grown healthy.
6. I Sam. 25:37. 7. I Kings 17:17. 8. Or: one. 9. Or: of Spain (in general).

[living] is often used also in the sense of acquisition of knowledge. Thus: *So shall they be life unto thy soul;*[10] *For whoso findeth me findeth life;*[11] *For they are life unto those that find them.*[12] This use is frequent. In accordance with it, correct opinions are called *life* and false opinions *death.* God, may He be exalted, says accordingly: *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and so on.*[13] He has thereby made it clear that *good* is *life* and that *evil* is *death* | and has explained these terms. I make a similar interpretation of His dictum, may He be exalted, *That ye may live,*[14] analogous to the traditional interpretation[15] of the dictum of Scripture: *That it may be well with thee, and so on.*[16] Because of this figurative sense being generally known in the Hebrew language, the Sages have said: *The righteous even in death are called living, [whereas] the wicked even in life are called dead.*[17] Know this.

CHAPTER 43

Wing [*kanaph*] is an equivocal term, and its equivocality is mostly due to its being used in a figurative sense. The first meaning given to it is that of a wing of the living beings that fly. Thus: *Any winged fowl that flieth in the heaven.*[1] Subsequently it was applied figuratively to the extremities and corners of garments. Thus: *Upon the four wings*[2] *of thy covering.*[3] Afterwards it was applied figuratively to the farthest ends and extremities of the habitable part of the earth, which are remote from the places where we live.[4] Thus: *That it might take hold of the wings*[5] *of the earth;*[6] *From the uttermost wing*[7] *of the earth have we heard songs.*[8] Ibn Janāḥ[9] says that the term also occurs with the signification of concealing, as it is akin to the Arabic, in which one may say, "kanaftu" a thing, meaning: I have concealed it. He accordingly interprets[10] the verse, *Yet shall not thy*

10. Prov. 3:22. 11. Prov. 8:35. 12. Prov. 4:22.
13. Deut. 30:15. The verse continues: *and death and evil.* 14. Deut. 5:30.
15. *tafsīr*, the word used here, may mean both "interpretation" and "translation."
16. Deut. 22:7. Cf. B.T., Qiddushin, 39, and the Aramaic translation of the verse attributed to Jonathan.
17. B.T., Berakhoth, 18a–b.
1. Deut. 4:17. 2. I.e., corners. 3. Deut. 22:12. 4. Literally: from our places.
5. I.e., ends. 6. Job 38:13. 7. I.e., end. 8. Isa. 24:16.
9. A grammarian and lexicographer of the eleventh century.
10. See *The Book of Hebrew Roots, by Abū'l-Walīd Marwān Ibn Janāḥ*, ed. Ad. Neubauer (Oxford, 1875), p. 325.

Teacher be winged[11] [*yikaneph*], as meaning: thy Enlightener shall not be concealed and hidden away from thee; and this is a good explanation.[12] In my opinion this meaning occurs also in the verse, *And he shall not uncover the wing of his father*,[13] which means that he shall not uncover that of his father which is concealed. Similarly the verse, *Spread therefore thy wings over thy handmaid*,[14] has to be interpreted in my opinion as meaning: spread that by which thou concealest over thy handmaid. In my opinion it is in this sense that *wing* is figuratively applied to the Creator, may He be exalted, and also to the angels. For according to our opinion the angels have no bodies, as I shall make clear.[15] Accordingly the interpretation of the dictum of Scripture, *Under whose wings thou art come to trust*,[16] should be: thou art come | to be hidden under that by which He conceals. Similarly in all cases in which *wing* occurs with reference to the angels, it signifies that which conceals. Will you not consider the dictum of Scripture: *With twain*[17] *he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet?*[18] This means that the cause of his existence, I mean that of the angel, is most hidden and concealed, that cause being indicated by the expression *his face*. And similarly the things of which he, I mean the angel, is the cause – these being *his feet*, as we have made clear[19] when dealing with the equivocality of the word *foot* – are also hidden. For the acts of the intellects are hidden, and their effects become clear only after one has trained oneself. This is due to two causes, one of which should be referred to them and one to us.[20] I mean the weakness of our apprehension and the difficulty of apprehending, in its true reality, that which is separate from matter. As for the dictum of Scripture, *And with twain he did fly*,[21] I shall explain in a separate chapter[22] in what sense the motion of flying is attributed to the angels.

11. Isa. 30:20. 12. Or: translation. For *tafsīr*, see n. 15, preceding chap.
13. Deut. 23:1. 14. Ruth 3:9. 15. Cf. I 49.
16. Ruth 2:12. The complete verse reads: *The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*
17. I.e., two wings. 18. Isa. 6:2. 19. Cf. I 28.
20. Literally: from their direction and from our direction.
21. Isa. 6:2. 22. Cf. I 49.

CHAPTER 44

Eye [*ʿayin*] is an equivocal term. It is a term denoting a well[1] of water. Thus: *By an eye*[2] *of water in the wilderness.*[3] It is also a term denoting the seeing eye. Thus: *Eye for eye.*[4] It is further a term denoting providence.[5] Thus Scripture says with regard to *Jeremiah:*[6] *Take him and have*[7] *thy eyes on him;*[8] the meaning of which is: direct thy watchfulness to him. It is in the figurative sense that the term is used of God in every passage in question. Thus: *And Mine eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually,*[9] which means My providence and My purpose, as we have set forth before;[10] *The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it,*[11] which means that His providence is upon it; *Which are the eyes of the Lord that run to and fro,*[12] which means that His providence extends also to everything that is on earth, as shall be mentioned in the chapters dealing with providence that will come later on.[13] When, however, the word *seeing* or *beholding*, is joined with the word "eyes" — as for instance in the verses: *Open Thine two eyes . . . and see,*[14] and *His eyes behold*[15] — it is | intellectual apprehension that is meant in all these cases, and not sensory apprehension. For all sensation is, as you know, an affection and a state in which impressions are received, whereas He, may He be exalted, is active and not passive,[16] as I shall explain later on.

1. Maimonides here uses the Arabic word *ʿayn*, which, like the Hebrew *ʿayin*, means both an eye and a well of water.
2. I.e., well. 3. Gen. 16:7. 4. Exod. 21:24.
5. The term *ʿināyah* used here also means "watchfulness."
6. The words are spoken by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Chaldees, and are addressed to Nebuzaradan, who served him.
7. Literally: put. 8. Jer. 39:12. 9. I Kings 9:3. 10. Cf. I 39. 11 Deut. 11:12.
12. Zech. 4:10. The quotation as given by Maimonides is slightly inaccurate.
13. In Part III.
14. II Kings 19:16. The quotation as given by Maimonides is slightly inaccurate.
15. Ps. 11:4.
16. The word *munfaʿil* used here in the Arabic text is a passive participle of the verb *faʿala*: to do, to act. *infiʿāl*, which is the verbal noun of *munfaʿil*, has been rendered in this translation by the term "affection."

CHAPTER 45

To *hear* [*shamoᶜa*] is an equivocal word. It is used sometimes as having the meaning, to hear,[1] and sometimes as having the meaning, to accept. As for the meaning, to hear, it is found in the verses: *Neither let it be heard out of thy mouth;*[2] *And the report thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house.*[3] This use is frequent. Of a like frequency is use of *to hear* with the meaning, to accept. Thus: *And they heard*[4] *not Moses;*[5] *If they hear*[6] *and serve;*[7] *Shall we then hear*[8] *you?*[9] *And shall not hear*[10] *thy words.*[11] The word is also used in the sense of science and knowledge. Thus: *A nation whose tongue thou shalt not hear;*[12] the interpretation being, whose speech you shall not know. In all cases in which the word *hearing* occurs in relation to God and in which, according to the external meaning of the text, the word appears to be used in its first sense, it expresses the notion of apprehension, which pertains to the third sense. Thus: *And the Lord heard;*[13] *For that He hath heard your murmurings.*[14] In all these passages the apprehension of science is meant. If, however, according to the external meaning of the text, the word is used in its second sense, it expresses the notion that God, may He be exalted, responds, or does not respond, to the prayer of him who prays. Thus: *I will surely hear his cry;*[15] *I will hear, for I am gracious;*[16] *Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear;*[17] *But the Lord would not hear your voice, nor give ear unto you;*[18] *Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear;*[19] *For I will not hear thee.*[20] This use is frequent. As for these figurative senses and similes, you will be given an explanation that will quench your thirst and clear your doubt. The meanings of all of them will be made manifest to you, so that no difficulty will remain in anything that is in them. |

1. Maimonides here uses the Arabic word. 2. Exod. 23:13.
3. Gen. 45:16. 4. I.e., accepted. 5. Exod. 6:9. 6. I.e., accept.
7. Job 36:11. 8. I.e., accept. 9. Neh. 13:27. 10. I.e., accept.
11. Josh. 1:18. 12. Deut. 28:49. 13. Num. 11:1. 14. Exod. 16:7.
15. Exod. 22:22. 16. Exod. 22:26. 17. II Kings 19:16. 18. Deut. 1:45.
19. Isa. 1:15. 20. Jer. 7:16.

CHAPTER 46

We have mentioned in one[1] of the chapters of this Treatise[2] that there is an immense difference between guidance leading to a knowledge of the existence of a thing and an investigation of the true reality of the essence and substance of that thing. The reason is that guidance leading to the knowledge of the existence of a thing can be had even if that should be through the accidents of the thing or through its acts or through a relation – which may be very remote from the thing – existing between the latter and things other than itself. For instance, if you wish to make known the ruler of a certain region of the earth to one of the people of that ruler's country, who does not know him, you can inform him about that ruler and draw his attention to the latter's existence in many different ways. One of them consists in your saying that the ruler is a tall individual who is white in color and gray-haired. Thus you would make him known through his accidents. You may also say that he is the one whom you see surrounded by a great company of people, who are riding or on foot, with drawn swords around him and banners raised above his head, while trumpets are sounded in front of him; or that he is the one residing in a castle, that is in a certain city of that region of the earth; or that he is the one who ordered this wall to be built or this bridge to be laid; or you may mention similar actions of his and similar relations of his to what is other than he. You may, however, indicate his existence through circumstances that are of a more hidden nature than those that have been mentioned. For instance, if someone asks you, Has this country a ruler? you shall answer him, Yes, undoubtedly. And if he asks you, What proof is there for this? you shall tell him, This proof is to be found in the fact that while this money-changer is, as you see, a weak and small man and this great amount of dinars is placed before him, this other big, strong, and poor individual is standing in front of him | and asking him to give him as alms a carob-grain and that the money-changer does not do this, but reprimands him and drives him off by means of words. For, but for his fear of the ruler, the poor man would have been quick to kill him or to drive him away and to take the wealth that is in his possession. Accordingly, this is a proof of the fact that this city has a king. Thus you would have proved the existence of the king through the fact

1. Or: in some. 2. Cf. I 33.

that matters in the city proceed in an orderly fashion,[3] the cause of which is the fear of the ruler and the anticipation of the punishment he metes out.

Now in all that we have said by way of parable there is nothing to give an indication of the ruler's essence and of the true reality of his substance in respect of his being a ruler. A similar thing has occurred with regard to the knowledge of God, may He be honored and magnified, given to the multitude in all the books of the prophets and also in the *Torah*. For necessity required that all of them be given guidance to the belief in the existence of God, may He be exalted, and in His possessing all the perfections. I mean to say guidance to the belief that He does not merely exist, as the earth and the heavens do, but that He is an existent who is living, possessed of knowledge and of power,[4] active, and having all the other characteristics that ought to be believed in with reference to His existence. This shall be made clear later on. The minds of the multitude were accordingly guided to the belief that He exists by imagining that He is corporeal,[5] and to the belief that He is living by imagining that He is capable of motion.[6] For the multitude perceive nothing other than bodies as having a firmly established existence and as being indubitably true, for anything that is not a body, but subsists in a body, is existent; but its existence is more deficient than that of a body, as it requires a body in order to exist. That, however, which is neither a body nor in a body is not an existent thing in any respect, according to man's initial representation, particularly from the point of view of the imagination. Similarly the multitude do not represent to themselves the notion of life as anything other than motion and consider that that which has no local motion due to its will is not alive, despite the fact that motion does not pertain to the substance of the living but is an accident attaching to it. Similarly apprehension, | as it is habitually known among us, comes about through the instrumentality of the senses, I mean to say through hearing and seeing. And similarly we do not know nor can we represent to ourselves how a notion can be transmitted from the soul of one individual who is among us to the soul of another individual except through the instrumentality of speech, which is a sound produced by the lips,[7] the tongue, and the other organs of speech. Accordingly, as our minds are likewise guided to the belief that God, may He be exalted, apprehends and that notions are communicated from Him to the prophets in order that

3. Literally: through the orderliness of the circumstances of the city.
4. Literally: knowing and being able.
5. Literally: by means of the imagination of corporeality.
6. Literally: by means of the imagination of motion.
7. More or less literally: cut by the lip.

they should communicate them to us, He is described to us as hearing and seeing; the meaning thereof being that He apprehends and knows the visible and audible things. He is also described to us as speaking; the meaning thereof being that notions are communicated from Him, may He be exalted, to the prophets. This is the meaning of prophecy. Later on this shall be made extremely clear. Again, as we have no intellectual cognition of our bringing somebody other than us to existence except through a direct act,[8] He is described as active. Similarly, in view of the fact that the multitude apprehend no living thing that is not endowed with a soul, He is also described to us as having a soul. And though the term "soul" is an equivocal one, as has been made clear,[9] the meaning is that He is living. Since with regard to us the apprehension can be made that all these acts are only performed by means of bodily organs, all these organs are figuratively ascribed to Him: those by means of which local motion takes place—I mean the feet and their soles; those by means of which hearing, seeing, and smelling come about—that is, the ear, the eye, and the nose; those by means of which speech and the matter[10] of speech are produced—that is, the mouth, the tongue, and the voice; finally, those by means of which he among us who acts carries out his actions—those organs are the hands, the fingers, the palm, and the arm.

To sum up all this: God, may He be exalted above every deficiency, has had bodily organs figuratively ascribed to Him in order that | His acts should be indicated by this means. And those particular acts are figuratively ascribed to Him in order to indicate a certain perfection, which is not identical with the particular act mentioned. For instance, an eye, an ear, a hand, a mouth, a tongue, have been figuratively ascribed to Him so that by this means, sight, hearing, action, and speech should be indicated. But sight and hearing have been figuratively ascribed to Him with a view to indicating apprehension in general. For this reason you will find that the Hebrew language substitutes the apprehension made by one sense for that made by another. Thus Scripture says: *See the word of the Lord;*[11] which is like *hear*, for the intended meaning is: apprehend the meaning of His speech. Similarly: *See the smell of my son;*[12] which is like saying, *Smell the smell of my son*, for the intended meaning refers to the apprehension

8. The word *mubāshara* used here also means "an act accomplished through contact" and "sexual intercourse."
9. Cf. I 41.
10. Maimonides uses the word *mādda*, meaning "matter" (*materia*). The expression "matter of speech" refers to sounds.
11. Jer. 2:31. 12. Gen. 27:27.

of his smell. In conformity with this it is said, *And all the people saw the sounds*,[13] although this station also constituted *a vision of prophecy*, as is well known and universally admitted in our community.[14] Action and speech are ascribed to God so that an overflow proceeding[15] from Him should thereby be indicated, as shall be made clear further on.[16] All bodily organs that you can find mentioned in all of the books of prophecy are either organs of local motion mentioned with a view to indicating life, or organs of sensation mentioned with a view to indicating apprehension, or organs of prehension mentioned with a view to indicating action, or organs of speech mentioned with a view to indicating the overflow of the intellects toward the prophets, as will be made clear. The guidance contained in all these figurative senses is intended to establish in us the belief that there is an existent who is living, is the agent[17] who produces everything other than He, and in addition apprehends His own act. When we shall begin to expound the negation of the attributes, we shall make clear[18] how all this is reducible to one notion, which is exclusively that of the essence of God, may He be exalted. For the purpose of the present chapter is solely to make clear the meaning of the bodily organs ascribed to God, may He be exalted above every deficiency, and to explain that | all of them are mentioned with a view to indicating the actions proper to these organs, which actions – according to us[19] – constitute a perfection. In this way we indicate that He is perfect in various manners of perfection, a circumstance to which the Sages draw our attention by saying: *The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man.*[19a]

The organs of local motion ascribed to Him, may He be exalted, are, for instance, those figuring in scriptural dicta such as these: *The stool of My feet;*[20] *And the place of the soles of My feet.*[21]

The organs of prehension ascribed to Him may be found in scriptural dicta such as these: *The hand of the Lord;*[22] *With the finger of God;*[23] *The work of Thy fingers;*[24] *And Thou hast laid Thine palm upon me;*[25] *And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*[26] *Thy right hand, O Lord.*[27]

13. Exod. 20:15.
14. Literally: in the community. The word translated "community" is *millah*, which in Maimonides' time connoted primarily a religious community.
15. Literally: overflowing (as a participle). 16. Cf. II 12.
17. *fāʿil*, a participle of the verb *faʿala*, which may mean "to act," but which also has a transitive sense coming close to the verbs "to do" or even "to make."
18. Cf. I 53.
19. I.e., according to the human point of view.
19a. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣiʿa, 31b.
20. Isa. 66:1. 21. Ezek. 43:7. 22. Exod. 9:3. 23. Exod. 31:18.
24. Ps. 8:4. 25. Ps. 139:5. 26. Isa. 53:1. 27. Exod. 15:6.

The organs of speech ascribed to Him may be found in the scriptural dicta such as these: *The mouth of the Lord has spoken;*[28] *And He would open His lips against thee;*[29] *The voice of the Lord is powerful;*[30] *And His tongue is as a devouring fire.*[31]

The organs of sensation ascribed to Him may be found in scriptural dicta such as these: *His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men;*[32] *The eyes of the Lord that run to and fro;*[33] *Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear;*[34] *For ye have kindled a fire in My nostril.*[35]

Of the hidden parts of the body, only the heart is ascribed to Him because of its being an equivocal term. For it is also a term denoting the intellect; it is, moreover, the principle of life in living beings. For the dicta of Scripture, *My bowels are troubled for him,*[36] and, *The trouble of Thy bowels,*[37] are intended likewise to signify the heart, for bowel is a term used in a general and particular sense. In its particular sense, it is a term denoting the intestines; whereas in its general sense, it is a term denoting all the hidden parts of the body. It is accordingly also a term denoting the heart. A proof of this is to be found in the dictum, *And Thy Law is within my bowels,*[38] which is equivalent to its saying, *within my heart.* On this account it says in the *verse*: *My bowels are troubled,* and, *The trouble of Thy bowels.*[39] For the *expression trouble* is applied to the heart rather than to the other parts of the body. Thus: *My heart troubles me.*[40] Similarly a shoulder is not figuratively ascribed to Him because it is, according to what is generally known, an organ of transport, and also because the thing that is transported touches it. All the more are the organs of nutrition not figuratively ascribed to Him, for even | according to what first comes to mind, these are clearly deficient.

In truth, the status of all the organs is the same — all of them, both the apparent and the hidden, being organs required for the various actions of the soul. Some of them are organs required of necessity in order that the individual may last for a certain time. All the hidden parts of the body are of this nature. And some are organs required of necessity in order that the species should last. The organs of generation are of this nature. Some again are organs required in order that the individual be in a good state and that his actions be perfected. The feet, the hands, and the eyes are of this nature

28. Isa. 1:20. 29. Job 11:5. 30. Ps. 29:4. 31. Isa. 30:27.
32. Ps. 11:4.
33. Zech. 4:10. The quotation as given by Maimonides is slightly inaccurate.
34. II Kings 19:16. 35. Jer. 17:4. 36. Jer. 31:20. 37. Isa. 63:15.
38. Ps. 40:9. 39. Two verses quoted above are referred to here.
40. Jer. 4:19.

– all of them being required for the perfection of motion, work, and apprehension. Now the necessity of motion for living beings is due to its being required for the pursuit of what agrees with them and for the avoidance of what disagrees. The necessity of the senses, on the other hand, lies in their being required in order that what disagrees should be distinguished from what agrees with one.[41] Again the need of man for manufacturing work is due to its being required for the preparation of his food, his clothing, and his place of shelter. For this is bound up with his nature, I mean his needing to prepare what is suitable for him. Sometimes it is found that some animals possess a certain craft because of their need for that particular craft. Now I perceive no one who would doubt the fact that God, may He be exalted, has no need of a thing that would prolong His existence or improve His circumstances. Accordingly He has no organs; I mean to say by this that He is not a body and that His acts are performed through His essence and not through an organ. Now faculties[42] undoubtedly pertain to the class of organs. Accordingly He does not possess any faculty. Thereby I mean that there does not exist in Him anything other than His essence in virtue of which object He might act, know, or will. For the attributes are merely faculties[43] with regard to which the terminology, and nothing else, has been changed. However, this is not the subject of this chapter.

The Sages, *may their memory be blessed*, have made a comprehensive dictum rejecting everything that is suggested to the estimative faculty by any of the corporeal attributive qualifications mentioned by the prophets. This dictum will indicate to you that the doctrine of the corporeality of God did not ever occur even for a single day to the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, and that this was not according to them a matter lending itself to imagination or to confusion. | For this reason you will find that in the whole of the *Talmud* and in all the *Midrashim*[44] they keep to the external sense of the dicta of the prophets . This is so because of their knowledge that this matter is safe from confusion[45] and that with regard to it no error is to be feared in any respect; all the dicta have to be considered as parables and as a guidance conducting the mind toward one being. And when the parable is of a consistent nature – as when God, may He be exalted, is

41. Literally: as for the necessity of the senses, it is for the knowledge of what disagrees from what agrees.
42. *quwwā*. The word also means "forces."
43. Cf. preceding note. 44. In the text: *Midrashoth*.
45. The Arabic text also permits this translation: In this matter confusion is safe. (In fact, if one solely considers the wording of the text, the latter translation seems to be more exact.)

likened to a king, who gives orders and prohibitions to, and punishes and rewards, the people of his country, and who has servants and executives who carry out his orders and do for him what he wishes to be done – they, I mean the *Sages*, likewise kept to this parable in every passage and spoke, in conformity with what the parable requires, of speech, of a favorable answer being given, or of a refusal with regard to a particular matter, and of other such actions of kings. In all this they felt themselves sure and safe in that there would not be confusion and difficulty with regard to this point. The comprehensive dictum to which we have alluded is their dictum in *Bereshith Rabbah*,[46] which reads: *Great is the power of the prophets; for they liken a form to its creator. For it is said: And upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man.*[47] They have thus made clear and manifest that all the forms apprehended by all the prophets in *the vision of prophecy* are created forms of which God is the Creator. And this is correct, for every imagined form is created. How admirable is their saying: *Great is the power*, as though to say they, peace be on them, considered this matter great. For they always speak in this way when they express their appreciation of the greatness of something said or done, but whose appearance is shocking. Thus they say:[48] *A certain rabbi performed the act* [*of ḥaliṣa*[49]] *with a slipper, alone and by night. Another rabbi said thereupon: How great is his strength to have done it alone.*[50] *How great is his strength* means *how great is his power*. They say, as it were: how great was the thing that the prophets were driven | to do when they indicated the essence of God, may He be exalted, by means of the created thing that He has created. Understand this thoroughly. They have thus made clear and manifest, as far as they themselves are concerned, that they were innocent of the belief in the corporeality of God; and furthermore, that all the shapes and figures that are seen *in the vision of prophecy* are created things. However, the prophets *likened a form to its creator*, as the Sages, *may their memory be blessed*, put it. If, however, after these things have been said, someone out of malice wishes to think ill of them, depreciating men who are not seen and about whom there is no clear indication at present,[51] his doing this will not harm them, *may their memory be blessed.*

46. Genesis Rabbah, XXVII. 47. Ezek. 1:26. 48. B.T., Yebamoth, 104a.
49. A rite by which a man renounces the obligation to marry his brother's widow and sets her free to marry somebody else.
50. The current editions of the Talmud have a slightly different text, the meaning of which is: *to have followed the minority*. This dictum is in Aramaic, whereas the one quoted from Genesis Rabbah is in Hebrew.
51. Or: men whom he has not seen and of whom he has at present no knowledge; or: men who did not see him and who have at present no knowledge.

CHAPTER 47

We have mentioned several times[1] that the books of the prophets do not figuratively ascribe to God anything that the multitude imagine to be a deficiency or that one cannot represent to oneself as belonging to Him, may He be exalted, even if these things have the same status[2] as those that are figuratively ascribed to Him. For the things that are predicated of Him suggest to the estimative faculty certain perfections or can be imagined to be perfections with respect to Him. Accordingly, in view of this having been established, it behooves us to explain why hearing, sight, and the sense of smell are figuratively ascribed to Him, may He be exalted, whereas the sense of taste and that of touch are not.

Now the status of all five senses—with regard to the fact that He, may He be exalted, is high above them—is one and the same.[3] And all the senses are a deficiency from the standpoint of apprehension. This is so even with regard to a being that only apprehends by means of the senses, for the latter are passive, receptive of impressions, intermittent, and subject to pain, as are all the other organs. The meaning of our saying that He, may He be exalted, has sight is that He apprehends the visible things, and that of our saying that He has hearing is that He apprehends the audible things. He could similarly have had the sense of taste | and that of touch predicated of Him, and that could have been interpreted as meaning that He apprehends the things that are objects of the senses of taste and of touch. For the status of the apprehension of all of them is one and the same. If, however, the apprehension characteristic of one of the senses is denied Him, it would necessarily follow that the apprehensions characteristic of all of them[4]—I mean of all the five senses—should be denied Him. If, however, His having an apprehension characteristic of one of them—I mean an apprehension of what one of these senses apprehends—should be affirmed of Him, it would necessarily follow that He apprehends all the things apprehensible by the five senses.

Now we find that our books say, *And the Lord saw*,[5] *And the Lord heard*,[6] *And the Lord smelled*,[7] but they do not say, *And the Lord tasted*, nor do they say, *And the Lord touched*. The cause of this is to be found in

1. Cf. I 26 and 46. 2. Literally: law, or judgment.
3. Literally: and the law of [God's], may He be exalted, being elevated above the five senses is one.
4. Literally: all their five apprehensible [categories of objects of apprehension].
5. Cf. Gen. 6:5. 6. Cf. Num. 11:1. 7. Cf. Gen. 8:21.

the fact that it is firmly established in everyone's imagination that God does not encounter bodies in the way one body encounters another, for people do not even see it. Now these two senses, I mean the sense of taste and the sense of touch, do not apprehend the things sensed by them before they are in contact with them. On the other hand, the sense of sight, that of hearing, and that of smell, can apprehend from a distance the qualities sensed by them as well as the bodies that are the bearers of those qualities. It is, therefore, according to the imagination of the multitude, permitted to ascribe them to God. In addition, the purpose and the intent in figuratively ascribing to Him these senses are to indicate that He apprehends our actions. Now the sense of hearing and that of sight suffice for this; I mean hereby that by means of them everything that someone other than oneself does or says can be apprehended. Thus the Sages have said, when setting forth their admonitions by way of reproof and warning: *Know what is above thee, a seeing eye and a hearing ear.*[8]

Now when you investigate the true reality, you shall see that the status of all the senses is that of any one of them, and that from the same standpoint from which it is negated that He has apprehensions involving touch and taste, it should also be negated that He has sight, hearing, and the sense of smell. For all of them are apprehensions of a corporeal nature, affections, and changeable states. However, with regard to some of them, it is apparent that they are deficiencies, whereas others are deemed | to be perfections; just as it is manifest that to imagine is a deficiency, whereas it is not manifest that to reflect and gradually to understand is likewise a deficiency. Therefore *fancy*,[9] which word means imagination, is not figuratively ascribed to Him, whereas *thought* [*maḥshabah*] and *comprehension* [*tebunah*], which words mean reflection and understanding, are figuratively ascribed to Him. Thus it is said: *Which* [*the Lord*] *thought;*[10] *And with His comprehension He stretched out the heavens.*[11] Accordingly, the position with regard to the internal apprehensions is similar to that obtaining with regard to the external sensory apprehensions; some of the former as well as of the latter are figuratively ascribed to Him, while others are not. All this is *according to the language of the sons of man.* For they predicate of God what they deem to be a perfection in respect to Him and do not

8. Mishnah, Aboth, II 1. 9. *raʿyon.* This Hebrew word usually means "thought."
10. Jer. 49:20. The quotation as given by Maimonides is not accurate. The word equivalent to *the Lord* does not occur in the portion of the verse quoted in the text. However, this inaccuracy does not lead to an alteration of the meaning of the verse, nor does it entail the invalidation of the point that Maimonides makes.
11. Jer. 10:12.

predicate of Him that which is manifestly a deficiency. When, however, the true reality is investigated it will be found – as shall be demonstrated – that He has no essential attribute[12] existing in true reality, such as would be superadded to His essence.

CHAPTER 48

In all cases in which the notion of hearing occurs with reference to God, may He be exalted, you will find that *Onqelos the Proselyte* avoids the expression and has interpreted its meaning as signifying that the matter in question reached Him, may He be exalted, or that He apprehended it. Or if it occurs with regard to a prayer, he interprets its meaning as signifying that He accepted it or did not accept it. Thus when interpreting the words, *The Lord heard*, he always says, *It was heard before the Lord.* And with regard to prayer, he translates, *I will surely hear his cry*,[1] by the phrase, *I will surely accept.*[2] This happens continually in his interpretation, and he does not deviate from this usage in any place.

As for the expressions denoting sight that occur with reference to Him, may He be exalted, *Onqelos* varies with regard to them in a strange way, the purpose and intention of which are not clear to me. For in some place he interprets the words, *And the Lord saw*, by the words, *And the Lord beheld;* whereas in other passages he interprets these as follows: | *And it was revealed before the Lord.* Now the fact that in his interpretation he uses the words, *And the Lord beheld*, is a clear proof that the word *to behold* is equivocal in the Syriac[3] language, inasmuch as it indicates both the notion of an apprehension of the intellect and that of an apprehension of the senses. This being so, according to his opinion, would that I knew why in some cases he avoids the expression and interprets the Hebrew words as: *And it was revealed before the Lord.* When I examined the copies of this *translation* that I could find and withal what I had heard in the course of instruction, I discovered that in the cases in which the word *seeing* is found in conjunction

12. The word translated "attribute" derives from the same root as the verb translated "to predicate of."

1. Exod. 22:22. 2. In Aramaic.

3. *suryāniyya.* Syriac being a dialect of Aramaic, the Arabic word is applied by Maimonides and other writers also to the language of Onqelos, which is another dialect of Aramaic.

with wrongdoing or harming and committing an act of aggression, he interprets it as: *It was revealed before the Lord.* Thus there is no doubt that the word *to behold* has in that language[4] the meaning: to apprehend and to establish the thing apprehended as it is apprehended. Therefore when seeing is mentioned in connection with wrongdoing, he did not say, *And He beheld,* but, *And it was revealed before the Lord.* For I found that he used the word *to behold* to interpret the term *seeing* in all the passages in the whole of *Torah* in which the [Hebrew] word is used with reference to God, except in the verses that I am about to cite to you. *Because the Lord hath seen my affliction,*[5] translated by him: *Because my affliction was revealed before the Lord. For I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee,*[6] translated by him: *For before me it is revealed;* although in this case the speaker is but an angel, an apprehension indicative of his establishing the fact apprehended by him cannot be ascribed to him because this fact consists in wrongdoing. *And God saw the children of Israel,*[7] translated by him: *And the enslavement of the children of Israel was revealed before the Lord. I have surely seen the affliction of My people,*[8] translated by him: *The enslavement of My people was surely revealed before Me. And I have also seen the oppression,*[9] translated by him: *And the oppression was also revealed before Me. And that He had seen their affliction,*[10] translated by him: *For their enslavement was revealed before Him. I have seen this people,*[11] translated by him: *This people was revealed before me* – for the meaning of this verse is: I saw their disobedience; just as in the verse, *And God saw the children of Israel,*[12] the meaning is that He saw their misery. *And when the Lord saw [it], He abhorred [them],*[13] translated by him: *And it was revealed before the Lord. When He seeth that their power is gone,*[14] translated by him: *For it was revealed before Him* – for this | too is a state when wrong was done to them and when the enemy was dominant. All these passages are consistent and take into account the verse: *And Thou canst not look on iniquity.*[15] Thus it is on this account that [Onqelos] translates every reference to *enslavement* or disobedience by: *It was revealed before Him,* or *It was revealed before Me.*

However, this excellent and lengthy explanation,[16] which is not subject to doubt, is spoilt for me by three passages that, if the analogy held good,[17] ought to have been interpreted by him: *And it was revealed before the Lord.* But in the copies of his translation we find that he translates:

4. I.e., Syriac or Aramaic. 5. Gen. 29:32. Maimonides' quotation is slightly inaccurate.
6. Gen. 31:12. 7. Exod. 2:25. 8. Exod. 3:7. 9. Exod. 3:9.
10. Exod. 4:31. 11. Exod. 32:9. 12. This verse is quoted earlier in this chapter.
13. Deut. 32:19. 14. Deut. 32:36. 15. Hab. 1:13. 16. Of Onqelos' method.
17. Literally: according to this analogy (or syllogism).

And the Lord beheld. These passages are: *And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great;*[18] *And God saw the earth and, behold, it was corrupt;*[19] *And the Lord saw that Leah was hated.*[20] The explanation that seems to me the most probable is that those are mistakes that have crept into the copies of the translation, for we do not have *Onqelos'* autograph of these passages; if we had, we should have said that perhaps[21] he had in mind some interpretation with regard to this. As for his interpreting the verse, *God will see for Himself the lamb,*[22] by the words, *The lamb is revealed before the Lord,* this is so either because this does not suggest to the estimative faculty that God, may He be exalted, will start to seek the lamb and to bring it into existence, or because from the standpoint of the [Syriac] language it was considered shocking that His apprehension should be connected with such an individual as an animal devoid of reason. As far as these passages are concerned,[23] a careful investigation should be made with a view to correcting the copies of the translation. If, however, the passages are found to have the text we cited, I do not know what purpose [Onqelos] had in translating them in this manner.[24]

CHAPTER 49

The angels too are not endowed with bodies, but are intellects separate from matter. However, they are the objects of an act,[1] and God has created them, as will be explained.[2] The Sages say in *Bereshith Rabbah:*[3] *The flaming sword which turns every way,*[4] *is called thus with reference to the verse: His ministers a flaming fire.*[5] [*The expression*], *which turns every way,* | *alludes to the fact that sometimes they turn into men, sometimes into women, sometimes into spirits, and sometimes into angels.* Through this dictum they have made it clear that the angels are not endowed with matter and

18. Gen. 6:5. 19. Gen. 6:12. 20. Gen. 29:31.
21. Literally: Onqelos' autograph in this so as to say that perhaps. . . .
22. Gen. 22:8.
23. Maimonides evidently has in mind the three passages in which Onqelos' translation does not eliminate the suggestion that God apprehends evil.
24. Literally: I do not know for him a purpose in this.
1. *mafʿūlūna,* which is the past passive participle of the verb *faʿala*: "to act" or "to do."
2. Cf. II 2 and 6. 3. Genesis Rabbah, XXI *in fine.* 4. Gen. 3:24.
5. Ps. 104:4. Literally: *The flaming of the sword which turns every way, upon the name His ministers a flaming fire.*

that outside the mind they have no fixed corporeal shape, but that all such shapes are only to be perceived in *the vision of prophecy* in consequence of the action of the imaginative capacity, as will be mentioned in connection with the notion of the true reality of prophecy. As for their dictum, *sometimes into women* — which implies that the prophets likewise sometimes see the angels *in the vision of the prophecy* in *the form of women* — it refers to the dictum of *Zechariah*, peace be on him: *And, behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings, and so on.*[6]

Now you already know that it is very difficult for man to apprehend, except after strenuous training, that which is pure of matter and absolutely devoid of corporeality. It is particularly difficult for one who does not differentiate between that which is cognized by the intellect and that which is imagined and who tends mostly toward imaginative apprehension alone. For such a one everything that is imagined exists or can exist, whereas that which does not enter within the net of imagination is in his opinion non-existent and incapable of existing. Accordingly, to individuals of this kind — and they form the majority of those engaged in speculation — the true reality of a notion never becomes known, nor does a difficulty ever become clear to them. Because of the difficulty of this matter, the books of the prophets likewise contain dicta whose external sense can be understood as signifying that the angels are corporeal, that they move, that they are in the form of men, that they are given orders by God, and that they carry out His orders and do what He wishes in virtue of His orders. All this is said so as to guide the mind to a knowledge of their existence and of their being alive and perfect, as we have explained with regard to God.[7]

However, if one would stop at this imagining with regard to the angels, their true reality and essence would be like the essence of God as it is conceived in the imagination of the multitude. For about God too, | statements are made from whose external sense it appears that He is a living, mobile[8] body, having the form of a man. Therefore the mind is guided toward a knowledge of the fact that the rank of the existence of the angels is below the rank of the deity through the admixture with their shape of something belonging to the shape of irrational animals, so that what is understood with regard to the existence of the Creator should be more perfect than what is understood with regard to their existence, just as man is more perfect than the irrational animals. However, an animal shape is attributed to them by attribution of wings only and in no other way. For flying cannot be represented to oneself without wings, just as walking cannot be represented to

6. Zech. 5:9. 7. Cf. I 46. 8. Or: moving.

oneself without legs. For the existence of these faculties cannot possibly be represented to oneself except in so far as they subsist in these substrata. The motion of flying has been chosen in order to point to the angels being living beings. For it is the most perfect and the noblest of the motions of the irrational animals, and man believes it to be a great perfection; so that he even wishes to fly in order that it might be easy for him to flee from all that harms him and that he might betake himself swiftly to whatever agrees with him, even if it be far off. Accordingly this motion is ascribed to the angels. Moreover, a bird appears and is hidden, approaches and moves far away, in very quick time; and all these are characteristics that, as shall be explained,[9] it behooves us to believe that the angels possess.

However, this which is deemed to be perfection, I mean the motion of flying, is not in any way ascribed to God, because it is a motion pertaining to an animal not endowed with reason. For you should not make a mistake with regard to the dictum, *And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly*,[10] for it is the *cherub* that *did fly*. And this parable is merely intended to indicate the swiftness of the coming to pass of that matter.[11] Similarly Scripture says: *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt*,[12] which refers to the swiftness of the descent upon them of the calamity referred to.

Nor should you be led into error by what you find especially in *Ezekiel* with regard to *the face of an ox* and *the face of a lion* and *the face of an eagle* and *the sole of the foot of a calf*.[13] For this has | another interpretation, which you will hear.[14] It is also merely a description of the *animals*. These intentions will be explained by means of hints sufficient to awaken the attention.

As for the motion of flying, it occurs in the texts in every passage, and it cannot be represented to oneself without a wing. Accordingly it was supposed that the angels had wings in order that guidance be given concerning the state of their existence, but not with a view to obtaining knowledge of the true reality of their essence. Know that everyone who accomplishes a very swift movement is described as flying so as to indicate the swiftness of the movement. Thus Scripture says: *As the eagle swoopeth down*.[15] For the eagle is swifter in his flight and swoop than any other bird; for this reason it is used in the parable. Know also that the two wings are the causes of flying. For this reason the number of wings seen in the prophetic vision corresponded to that of the causes of motion of a moving[16] thing. However, this is not the subject of this chapter.

9. Cf. II 42. 10. Ps. 18:11. 11. The word also means "command." 12. Isa. 19:1. 13. Ezek. 1:10 and 1:7. 14. Cf. III 1. 15. Deut. 28:49. 16. Or: mobile.

CHAPTER 50

Know, thou who studiest this my Treatise, that belief is not the notion that is uttered, but the notion that is represented in the soul when it has been averred of it that it is in fact just as it has been represented. If you belong to those who are satisfied with expressing in speech the opinions that are correct or that you deem to be correct, without representing them to yourself and believing them, and still less without seeking certain knowledge regarding them, you take a very easy road. In accordance with this, you will find many stupid people holding to beliefs to which, in their representation, they do not attach any meaning whatever. If, however, you belong to those whose aspirations are directed toward ascending to that high rank which is the rank of speculation, and to gaining certain knowledge with regard to | God's being One by virtue of a true Oneness, so that no composition whatever is to be found in Him and no possibility of division in any way whatever – then you must know that He, may He be exalted, has in no way and in no mode any essential attribute, and that just as it is impossible that He should be a body, it is also impossible that He should possess an essential attribute. If, however, someone believes that He is one, but possesses a certain number of essential attributes, he says in his words that He is one, but believes Him in his thought to be many. This resembles what the Christians say: namely, that He is one but also three, and that the three are one. Similar to this is the assertion of him who says that He is one but possesses many attributes and that He and His attributes are one, while he denies at the same time His being corporeal and believes in His absolute simplicity; as if what we aimed at and investigated were what we should say and not what we should believe. For there is no belief except after a representation; belief is the affirmation that what has been represented is outside the mind just as it has been represented in the mind. If, together with this belief, one realizes that a belief different from it is in no way possible and that no starting point can be found in the mind for a rejection of this belief or for the supposition that a different belief is possible, there is certainty. When you shall have cast off desires and habits, shall have been endowed with understanding, and shall reflect on what I shall say in the following chapters, which shall treat of the negation of attributes, you shall necessarily achieve certain knowledge of it. Then you shall be one of those who represent to themselves *the unity of the Name*

and not one of those who merely proclaim it with their mouth without representing to themselves that it has a meaning. With regard to men of this category, it is said: *Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.*[1] But men ought rather to belong to the category of those who represent the truth[2] to themselves and apprehend it, even if they do not utter it, as | the virtuous are commanded to do – for they are told: *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*[3]

CHAPTER 51

There are many things in existence that are clear and manifest: primary intelligibles and things perceived by the senses and, in addition, the things that come near to these in respect to their clarity. If man had been left as[1] he [naturally] is, he would not have needed a proof of them – for instance, for the existence of motion, the existence of man's ability to act, the manifestations of generation and corruption, the natures of the things that are apparent to the senses, like the hotness of fire, the coldness of water, and many other things of this kind. Yet since strange opinions have arisen due either to people who committed errors or to people who acted with some end in view, so that professing such opinion they ran counter to the nature of existence and denied a sensibly perceived thing or wished to suggest to the estimative faculty the existence of a nonexistent thing, the men of science have had to resort to proving those manifest things and to disproving the existence of things that are only thought to exist. Thus we find that Aristotle establishes the fact of motion, as it had been denied, and demonstrates the nonexistence of atoms, as their existence had been asserted.[2] To this category belongs the denial of essential attributes to God, may He be exalted. For that denial is a primary intelligible, inasmuch as an attribute is not the essence of the thing of which it is predicated, but is a certain mode of the essence and hence an accident. If, however, the attribute were the essence of the thing of which it is predicated, the attribute

1. Jer. 12:2. 2. The word may also mean "God." 3. Ps. 4:5.

1. In accordance with the readings of several MSS, I read *kamā* instead of *wa-mā*, figuring in the text of Joel's edition.
2. The word *athbata*, translated "asserted," is also used by Maimonides in this chapter and elsewhere to denote the fact that true opinions were proved to be such. In those cases it is translated "establish" or "establish the truth of."

would be either a tautology[3] – as if you were saying that man is man – or the attribute would be a mere explanation of a term – as if you said that man is a rational living being. For being a rational animal | is the essence and true reality of man, and there does not exist in this case a third notion, apart from those of animal and of rational, that constitutes man. For man is the being of which life and rationality are predicated. Thus those attributes[4] merely signify an explanation of a term and nothing else. It is as if you said that the thing denoted by the term "man" is the thing composed of life and rationality. It is then clear that an attribute may be only one of two things. It is either the essence of the thing of which it is predicated, in which case it is an explanation of a term. We, in this respect, do not consider it impossible to predicate such an attribute of God, but do consider it impossible in another respect, as shall be made clear.[5] Or the attribute is different from the thing of which it is predicated, being a notion superadded to that thing. This would lead to the conclusion that that attribute is an accident belonging to that essence.

Now by denying the assertion that terms denoting accidents are attributes of the Creator, one does not deny the notion of accident. For every notion superadded to an essence is an adjunct to it and does not perfect its essence, and this is the meaning of accident. This should be considered in addition to the circumstances that there would be many eternal things if there were many attributes. For there is no oneness at all except in believing that there is one simple essence in which there is no complexity or multiplication of notions, but one notion only; so that from whatever angle you regard it and from whatever point of view you consider it, you will find that it is one, not divided in any way and by any cause into two notions; and you will not find therein any multiplicity either in the thing as it is outside of the mind or as it is in the mind, as shall be demonstrated in this Treatise.[6]

In discussing this subject, some people engaged in speculation have ended by saying that His attributes, may He be exalted, are neither His essence nor a thing external to His essence. This is similar to what others say, namely, that the modes – by which term they mean the universals – are neither existent nor nonexistent, and, again similar to what others say, that the atom | is not in a place, but occupies a locality, and that there is no act of a man but that there may be an acquisition of an act by him. These are things that are merely said; and accordingly they subsist only in

3. The Arabic word *tikrāran* means "several times."
4. In the singular in the Arabic. The attributes in question are life and rationality.
5. In the next chapter. 6. Cf. II 22.

words, not in the mind; all the more, they have no existence outside of the mind. But as you know and as everyone knows who does not deceive himself, these assertions are defended by means of many words and falsifying parables and are proved correct by shouting defamatory polemics and various complicated kinds of dialectic arguments and sophistries. Should, however, the man who proclaims these things and attempts to establish them in the ways indicated, reflect upon his belief, he would find nothing but confusion and incapacity. For he wants to make exist something that does not exist and to create a mean between two contraries that have no mean. Or is there a mean between that which exists and that which does not exist, or in the case of two things is there a mean between one of them being identical with the other or being something else? What forces him to this is, as we have said, the wish to preserve the conceptions of the imagination and the fact that all existent bodies are always represented to oneself as certain essences. Now every such essence is of necessity endowed with attributes, for we do not ever find an essence of a body that while existing is divested of everything and is without an attribute. This imagination being pursued, it was thought that He, may He be exalted, is similarly composed of various notions, namely, His essence and the notions that are superadded to His essence. Several groups of people pursued the likening of God to other beings and believed Him to be a body endowed with attributes. Another group raised themselves above this consequence and denied His being a body, but preserved the attributes. All this was rendered necessary by their keeping to the external sense of the revealed books as I shall make clear in later chapters that will deal with these notions.[7] |

CHAPTER 52

An attribute predicated of any thing, of which thing it is accordingly said that it is such and such, must necessarily belong to one of the following five groups:

The first group is characterized by the thing having its definition predicated of it — as when it is predicated of man that he is a rational living being. This attribute, which indicates the essence and true reality of a thing, is, as we have already made clear,[1] merely the explanation of a term and

7. Cf. I 53.
1. Cf. I 51.

nothing else. This kind of attribute should be denied to God according to everybody. For He, may He be exalted, has no causes anterior to Him that are the cause of His existence and by which, in consequence, He is defined. For this reason it is well known among all people engaged in speculation, who understand what they say, that God cannot be defined.

The second group is characterized by the thing having part of its definition predicated of it—as when it is predicated of man that he is a living being or a rational being. This attribute signifies an inseparable connection. For our saying, every man is rational, signifies that reason must be found in every being in whom humanity is found. This kind of attribute should be denied to God, may He be exalted, according to everybody. For if He has a part of an essence, His essence must be composite. The absurdity of divine attributes belonging to this group is like the absurdity recognized with regard to the first group.

The third group consists of attributes predicated of a thing that go beyond its true reality and its essence so that the attribute in question is not a thing through which the essence is perfected and constituted. Consequently that attribute is a certain quality with respect to the thing of which it is predicated. Now quality, considered one of the supreme genera,[2] is regarded as one | of the accidents. Thus if an attribute belonging to this group would subsist in Him, may He be exalted, He would be a substratum of accidents. This is sufficient to show how far from His true reality and essence this is, I mean the supposition that He is endowed with quality. It is, however, strange that those who proclaim the existence of attributes, deny with reference to Him, may He be exalted, the possibility of likening Him to something else and of qualifying Him. For what is the meaning of their saying that He may not be qualified unless it be that He is not endowed with quality? Now every attribute that is affirmed of a certain essence as pertaining to it essentially either constitutes the essence, in which case it is identical with the latter, or is a quality of that essence.

Now there are, as you know, four genera of qualities. I will accordingly give you examples in the way of attributes of every one of these genera, in order that the impossibility of the subsistence of attributes of this kind in God, may He be exalted, be made clear to you. The first example is as follows. You predicate of a man one of his speculative or moral habits or one of the dispositions subsisting in him qua an animate being, as when you say someone is a carpenter or chaste or ill. There is no difference between

2. Literally: and it is a supreme genus. By "supreme genus" is meant one of the Aristotelian categories.

your saying a carpenter or your saying a learned man or a sage,[3] all of these being dispositions subsisting in the soul. There is also no difference between your saying a chaste man and your saying a merciful man. For all arts, sciences, and settled moral characters are dispositions subsisting in the soul. All this is clear to whoever has occupied himself even to the slightest extent with the art of logic. The second example is as follows. You predicate of a thing a natural faculty that is in it or the absence of a natural faculty, as when you say soft or hard. And there is no difference between your saying soft and hard and your saying strong and weak, all these being natural dispositions. The third example is as follows. You predicate of a man a passive quality or an affection,[4] as when you say someone is irascible, irritable, timid, or merciful, | in cases in which this character is not firmly established. Your predicating a color, a taste, a smell, warmth, coldness, dryness, and humidity of a certain thing also belongs to this kind. The fourth example is as follows. You predicate of a thing that which pertains to it in respect of quantity considered as such, as when you say long, short, crooked, and straight and other similar things. Now when you consider all these attributes and what is akin to them, you will find that it is impossible to ascribe them to God. For He does not possess quantity so that there might pertain to Him a quality pertaining to quantity as such. Nor does He receive impressions and affections so that there might pertain to Him a quality belonging to the affections. Nor does He have dispositions so that there might be faculties and similar things pertaining to Him. Nor is He, may He be exalted, endowed with a soul, so that He might have a habitus pertaining to Him—such as clemency, modesty, and similar things—or have pertain to Him that which pertains to animate[5] beings as such—for instance, health and illness. It is accordingly clear to you that no attribute that may be brought under the supreme genus of quality can subsist in Him, may He be exalted.

With regard to those three groups of attributes—which are the attributes indicative of the essence or of a part of the essence or of a certain quality subsisting in the essence— it has already been made clear that they are impossible with reference to Him, may He be exalted, for all of them are indicative of composition, and the impossibility of composition in respect to the deity we shall make clear by demonstration.[6]

The fourth group of attributes is as follows. It is predicated of a thing

3. *ḥakīm*. The word often means "philosopher."
4. The Arabic term translated "passive" is an adjective derived from the term rendered by "affection."
5. I.e., beings having a soul. 6. Cf. II 1.

that it has a relation to something other than itself. For instance, it is related to a time or to a place or to another individual, as for instance when you predicate of Zayd that he is the father of a certain individual or the partner of a certain individual or an inhabitant of a certain place or one who was at a certain time. Now this kind of attribute does not necessarily entail either multiplicity or change in | the essence of the thing of which it is predicated. For the Zayd who is referred to may be the partner of Umar, the father of Bakr, the master of Khālid, a friend of Zayd, an inhabitant of such and such dwelling place, and one who was born in such and such a year. Those notions of relation are not the essence of the thing or something subsisting in its essence, as do the qualities. At first thought it seems that it is permissible to predicate of God, may He be exalted, attributes of this kind. However, when one knows true reality and achieves greater exactness in speculation, the fact that this is impossible becomes clear. There is no relation between God, may He be exalted, and time and place; and this is quite clear. For time is an accident attached to motion, when the notion of priority and posteriority is considered in the latter and when motion becomes numbered, as is made clear in the passages especially dealing with this subject. Motion, on the other hand, is one of the things attached to bodies, whereas God, may He be exalted, is not a body. Accordingly there is no relation between Him and time, and in the same way there is no relation between Him and place. The subject of investigation and speculation is therefore the question whether there is between Him, may He be exalted, and any of the substances created by Him a true relation of some kind so that this relation might be predicated of Him. It is clear at the first glance that there is no correlation between Him and the things created by Him. For one of the properties of two correlated things is the possibility of inverting the statement concerning them while preserving their respective relations.[7] Now He, may He be exalted, has a necessary existence while that which is other than He has a possible[8] existence, as we shall make clear.[9] There accordingly can be no correlation between them. As for the view that there is some relation between them, it is deemed correct, but this is not correct. For it is impossible to represent oneself that a relation subsists between the intellect and color although, according to our school, both of them are comprised by the same "existence." How then can a relation be represented between Him and what is other than He when there is no notion comprising in any respect both of the two, inasmuch as

7. More or less literally: inverting with equipoise. 8. Or: contingent.
9. Cf. II Introduction and II 1.

existence is, in our opinion, affirmed of Him, may He be exalted, and of what | is other than He merely by way of absolute equivocation. There is, in truth, no relation in any respect between Him and any of His creatures. For relation is always found between two things falling under the same — necessarily proximate — species, whereas there is no relation between the two things if they merely fall under the same genus. On this account one does not say that this red is more intense than this green or less or equally so, though both fall under the same genus, namely, color. If, however, two things fall under two different genera, there is no relation between them in any respect whatever, not even according to the inchoate notions of common opinion; this holds even for cases in which the two things[10] fall in the last resort under one higher genus. For instance, there is no relation between a hundred cubits and the heat that is in pepper inasmuch as the latter belongs to the genus quality and the former to the genus quantity. There is no relation either between knowledge and sweetness or between clemency and bitterness, though all of them fall under the supreme genus quality. How then could there subsist a relation between Him, may He be exalted, and any of the things created by Him, given the immense difference between them with regard to the true reality of their existence, than which there is no greater difference? If a relation subsisted between them, it would necessarily follow that the accident of relation must be attached to God. Even if it is not an accident with regard to His essence, may He be exalted, nevertheless it is, generally speaking, some sort of accident. There is accordingly no way of escape offering the possibility of affirming that He has an attribute, not even with regard to relation, if one has knowledge of true reality. However, relation is an attribute with regard to which it is more appropriate than with regard to the others that indulgence should be exercised if it is predicated of God. For it does not entail the positing of a multiplicity of eternal things or the positing of alteration taking place in His essence, may He be exalted, as a consequence of an alteration of the things related to Him.

The fifth group of the affirmative attributes is as follows. A thing has its action predicated of it. I do not intend to signify by the words, his action, the habitus of an art that belongs to him who is described — as when you say | a carpenter or a smith — inasmuch as this belongs to the species of quality, as we have mentioned. But I intend to signify by the words, his action, the action that he who is described has performed — as when you

10. Or: the two genera. The sense of the Arabic phrase admits of both interpretations.

say Zayd is the one who carpentered[11] this door, built that particular wall, or wove this garment. Now this kind of attribute is remote from the essence of the thing of which it is predicated. For this reason it is permitted that this kind should be predicated of God, may He be exalted, after you have—as shall be made clear[12]—come to know that the acts in question need not be carried out by means of differing notions subsisting within the essence of the agent, but that all His different acts, may He be exalted, are all of them carried out by means of His essence, and not, as we have made clear, by means of a superadded notion.

A summary of the contents of the present chapter would be as follows: He, may He be exalted, is one in all respects; no multiplicity should be posited in Him; there is no notion that is superadded to His essence; the numerous attributes possessing diverse notions that figure in the Scriptures[13] and that are indicative of Him, may He be exalted, are mentioned in reference to the multiplicity of His actions and not because of a multiplicity subsisting in His essence, and some of them, as we have made clear,[14] also with a view to indicating His perfection according to what we consider as perfection. As for the question whether it is possible that one simple essence in which no multiplicity is posited should perform diverse actions, the answer shall be made clear by means of examples.

CHAPTER 53

The reasons that led those who believe in the existence of attributes belonging to the Creator to this belief are akin to those that led those who believe in the doctrine of His corporeality to that belief. For he who believes in this doctrine was not led to | it by intellectual speculation; he merely followed the external sense of the texts of the Scriptures.[1] This is also the case with regard to the attributes. For inasmuch as the books of the prophets and the revealed books existed, which predicated attributive qualifications of Him, may He be exalted, these were taken in their literal sense; and He was believed to possess attributes. The people in question

11. The verb *najara* used in the Arabic text is akin to and perhaps derives from the word *najjār*, meaning "carpenter."
12. In the next chapter. 13. Literally: books. 14. Cf. I 26, 46, 47.
1. Literally: books.

have, as it were, divested God of corporeality but not of the modes of corporeality, namely, the accidents – I mean the aptitudes of the soul, all of which are qualities. For with regard to every attribute that the believer in attributes considers to be essential in respect to God, may He be exalted, you will find that the notion of it is that of a quality, even if these people do not state it clearly; for they in fact liken the attribute in question to what they meet with in the various states of all bodies endowed with an animal soul. Of all this it is said: *The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man.*[2] The purpose for which all these attributes are used is to predicate perfection of Him, but not the particular notion that is a perfection with respect to creatures possessing a soul. Most of these attributes are attributes pertaining to His diverse actions. Now there need not be a diversity in the notions subsisting in an agent because of the diversity of his various actions. Of this I shall give you an instance taken from things that are to be found with us – I mean an example of the fact that though an agent is one, diverse actions may proceed from him, even if he does not possess will and all the more if he acts through will. An instance of this is fire: it melts some things, makes others hard, cooks and burns, bleaches and blackens. Thus if some man would predicate of fire that it is that which bleaches and blackens, which burns and cooks, which makes hard and which melts, he would say the truth. Accordingly he who does not know the nature of fire thinks that there subsist in it six diverse notions, by means of one of which it blackens, whereas it bleaches by means of another, cooks by means of a third, | burns by means of a fourth, melts by means of a fifth, and makes hard by means of a sixth – all these actions being opposed to one another, for the meaning of any one of them is different from that of any other. However, he who knows the nature of fire, knows that it performs all these actions by virtue of one active quality, namely, heat. If, however, such a state of affairs exists with respect to a thing acting by virtue of its nature, it exists all the more with respect to one who acts through will, and again all the more with respect to Him, may He be exalted, who is above every attributive qualification. We have grasped with regard to Him relations having corresponding diverse notions – for the notion of knowledge is in us other than the notion of power, and the latter other than the notion of will. Yet how can we regard as a necessary consequence of this the subsistence in Him of diverse notions that are essential to Him, so that there would subsist in Him something by virtue of which He knows as well as something by virtue of which He wills and something by virtue

2. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣi'a, 31b.

of which He has power, for this is the meaning of the attributes whose existence is asserted by the people in question? Some of them state this clearly, enumerating the notions that are superadded to the essence. Others belonging to them do not state this clearly; however it is quite clear in their belief, even if it is not expressed in comprehensible language. This is the case when some of them assert that He possesses power[3] because of His essence, possesses knowledge[4] because of His essence, is living because of His essence, possesses will[5] because of His essence.

I shall illustrate this by the example of the rational faculty subsisting in man. It is one faculty with regard to which no multiplicity is posited. Through it he acquires the sciences and the arts; through the same faculty he sews, carpenters, weaves, builds, has a knowledge of geometry,[6] and governs the city. Those very different actions, however, proceed from one simple faculty in which no multiplicity is posited. Now these actions are very different, and their number is almost infinite — I mean the number of the arts brought forth by the rational faculty. It accordingly should not be regarded as inadmissible in reference to God, may He be magnified and honored, that | the diverse actions proceed from one simple essence in which no multiplicity is posited and to which no notion is superadded. Every attribute that is found in the books of the deity, may He be exalted, is therefore an attribute of His action and not an attribute of His essence, or it is indicative of absolute perfection. There accordingly is not, as these people believe, an essence composed of diverse notions. For the fact that they do not use the term "composition" does not abolish the notion of composition with regard to the essence possessing attributes. However, there exists a point of doubt that led them to this doctrine. This is the one I am going to explain to you. For those who believe in attributes do not do so because of the multiplicity of His actions. Rather do they say: Yes, the One Essence performs diverse actions, but the attributes that are essential to Him, may He be exalted, do not belong to His actions. For it is not permissible to imagine that God has created His own essence. They differ with respect to those attributes that they call essential, I mean with regard to their number, inasmuch as all of them follow the text of some book. We shall mention that as to which all of them agree and consider to be cognized by the intellect and in which case there is no need to follow the text of the word of a prophet. There are four such attributes: living,

3. Literally: powerful. 4. Literally: knowing. 5. Literally: willing.
6. This is the usual meaning of *handasa* in medieval Arabic; however, the word may also signify "architecture." Possibly Maimonides had the second meaning in mind in this passage.

possessing power, possessing knowledge, possessing will.[7] They say that these are distinct notions and such perfections that it would be impossible for the deity to be deprived of any of them. It is not permissible to suppose that they belong to His actions. This is a summary of their opinion.

Now you know that the notion of knowledge in reference to Him, may He be exalted, is identical with the notion of life, for everyone who apprehends his own essence possesses both life and knowledge by virtue of the same thing. For we wished to signify by "knowledge" the apprehension of one's own essence. Now the essence that apprehends is undoubtedly the same as the essence that is apprehended. For in our opinion He is not composed of two things, | the thing that apprehends and another thing that does not apprehend, as man is composed of a soul that apprehends and of a body that does not apprehend. Accordingly, inasmuch as our saying "possessing knowledge" is intended to signify "he who apprehends his own essence," life and knowledge form in this case one notion. However, the people in question do not consider this notion but consider rather His apprehension of His creatures. Similarly, without any doubt, neither power nor will exists in, and belongs to, the Creator in respect to His own essence; for He does not exercise His power on His own essence, nor can it be predicated of Him that He wills His own essence. And nobody represents this to himself. Rather have these attributes been thought of in reference to the diverse relations that may obtain between God, may He be exalted, and the things created by Him. For He possesses the power to create what He created, and possesses the power to bring into being that which exists in the manner in which He has brought it into being, and also possesses the knowledge of what He has brought into being. Thus it has become clear to you that these attributes too are not to be considered in reference to His essence, but in reference to the things that are created. For this reason, we, the community of those who profess the Unity by virtue of a knowledge of the truth—just as we do not say that there is in His essence a superadded notion by virtue of which He has created the heavens, and another one by virtue of which He has created the elements, and a third one by virtue of which He has created the intellects—so we do not say that there is in Him a superadded notion by virtue of which He possesses power, and another by virtue of which He possesses will, and a third one by virtue of which He knows the things created by Him. His essence is, on the contrary, one and simple, having no notion that is superadded to it in any respect. This essence has created everything that it has created and knows it, but

7. Literally: powerful, knowing, willing.

absolutely not by virtue of a superadded notion. It makes no difference whether these diverse attributes correspond to His actions or to diverse relations between Him and the things produced by the actions, in conformity with what we have likewise explained[8] regarding the truth of relation and its being merely something that is in thought.[9] This is what ought | to be believed with regard to the attributes mentioned in the books of the prophets; or, as we shall make clear,[10] it may be believed with regard to some of them that they are attributes indicative of a perfection likened to our perfections, which are understood by us.

CHAPTER 54

Know that the master of those who know, *Moses our Master*, peace be on him, made two requests and received an answer to both of them. One request consisted in his asking Him, may He be exalted, to let him know His essence and true reality. The second request, which he put first, was that He should let him know His attributes. The answer to the two requests that He, may He be exalted, gave him consisted in His promising him to let him know all His attributes, making it known to him that they are His actions, and teaching him that His essence cannot be grasped as it really is. Yet He drew his attention to a subject of speculation through which he can apprehend to the furthest extent that is possible for man. For what has been apprehended by [Moses], peace be on him, has not been apprehended by anyone before him nor will it be apprehended by anyone after him.

His request regarding the knowledge of [God's] attributes is conveyed in his saying: *Show me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee, and so on.*[1] Consider the wondrous notions contained in this dictum. For his saying, *Show me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee*, indicates that God, may He be exalted, is known through His attributive qualifications; for when he would know the *ways*, he would know Him. Furthermore his saying, *That I may find grace in Thy sight*,[2] indicates that he who knows God *finds grace in His sight* and not he who merely fasts and prays, but everyone who has knowledge of Him. Accordingly those who know Him are those who are favored by Him and permitted to come near Him, whereas those

8. Cf. I 52. 9. Literally: its being deemed. 10. Cf. I 59.
1. Exod. 33:13. 2. Exod. 33:13.

who do not know Him are objects of His wrath and are kept far away from Him. For His favor and wrath, His nearness and remoteness, correspond to | the extent of a man's knowledge or ignorance. However, we have gone beyond the limits of the subject of this chapter. I shall accordingly return to the subject.

When [Moses] asked for knowledge of the attributes and asked for forgiveness for the nation, he was given a [favorable] answer with regard to their being forgiven. Then he asked for the apprehension of His essence, may He be exalted. This is what he means when he says, *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory;*[3] whereupon he received a [favorable] answer with regard to what he had asked for at first – namely, *Show me Thy ways.* For he was told: *I will make all My goodness pass before thee.*[4] In answer to his second demand, he was told: *Thou canst not see My face, and so on.*[5] This dictum – *All my goodness* – alludes to the display to him of all existing things of which it is said: *And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.*[6] By their display, I mean that he will apprehend their nature and the way they are mutually connected so that he will know how He governs them in general and in detail. This notion is indicated when it says: *He is trusted in all My house;*[7] that is, he has grasped the existence of all My world with a true and firmly established understanding. For the opinions that are not correct are not firmly established. Accordingly the apprehension of these actions is an apprehension of His attributes, may He be exalted, with respect to which He is known. The proof of the assertion that the thing, the apprehension of which was promised to him, was the actions of God, may He be exalted, is the fact that what was made known to him were simply pure attributes of action: *merciful and gracious, long-suffering*[8]. It is then clear that the *ways* – for a knowledge of which he had asked and which, in consequence, were made known to him – are the actions proceeding from God, may He be exalted. The *Sages* call them *characteristics* and speak of the *thirteen characteristics.* This term, as they use it, is applied to moral qualities. Thus: *There are four characteristics among people who give charity; there are four characteristics among people who go to the house of learning.*[9] This expression | occurs frequently. The meaning here is not that He possesses moral qualities, but that He performs actions resembling the actions that in us proceed from moral qualities – I mean from aptitudes of the soul; the meaning is not that He, may He be exalted, possesses aptitudes of the soul. Scripture has restricted itself to mentioning only

3. Exod. 33:18. 4. Exod. 33:19. 5. Exod. 33:20. 6. Gen. 1:31.
7. Num. 12:7. 8. Exod. 34:6–7. 9. Mishnah, Aboth, V 13–14.

those *thirteen characteristics*, although [Moses] apprehended *all His goodness* – I mean to say all His actions – because these are the actions proceeding from Him, may He be exalted, in respect of giving existence to the Adamites[10] and governing them. This was [Moses'] ultimate object in his demand, the conclusion of what he says being: *That I may know Thee, to the end that I may find grace in Thy sight and consider that this nation is Thy people*[11] – that is, a people for the government of which I need to perform actions that I must seek to make similar to Thy actions in governing them.

It thus has become clear to you that the *ways* and the *characteristics* are identical. They are the actions proceeding from God, may He be exalted, in reference to the world. Accordingly, whenever one of His actions is apprehended, the attribute from which this action proceeds is predicated of Him, may He be exalted, and the name deriving from that action is applied to Him. For instance, one apprehends the kindness[12] of His governance in the production of the embryos of living beings, the bringing of various faculties to existence in them and in those who rear them after birth – faculties that preserve them from destruction and annihilation and protect them against harm and are useful to them in all the doings that are necessary to them. Now actions of this kind proceed from us only after we feel a certain affection and compassion, and this is the meaning of mercy. God, may He be exalted, is said to be *merciful*, just as it is said, *Like as a father is merciful to his children*,[13] and it says, *And I will pity them, as a man pitieth his own son.*[14] It is not that He, may He be exalted, is affected and has compassion. But an action similar to that which proceeds from a father in respect to his child and that is attached to compassion, pity, and an absolute passion, proceeds from Him, may He be exalted, in reference to His holy ones, not because of | a passion or a change. And just as when we give a thing to somebody who has no claim upon us, this is called *grace* in our language – as it says: *Grant them graciously*[15] – [so is the term applied to Him:] *Whom God hath graciously given;*[16] *Because God hath dealt graciously with me.*[17] Such instances are frequent. For He, may He be exalted, brings into existence and governs beings that have no claim upon Him with respect to being brought into existence and being governed. For this reason He is called *gracious*.

10. I.e., to men. 11. Exod. 33:13.
12. Literally: when the kindness. . . . In the Arabic text the sentence continues until "merciful" or even farther.
13. Ps. 103:13. 14. Mal. 3:17. 15. Judg. 21:22. 16. Gen. 33:5
17. Gen. 33:11.

Similarly we find among His actions that proceed with regard to the Adamites great calamities overtaking certain individuals and destroying them, or some universal event[18] annihilating whole tribes or even an entire region,[19] exterminating the children and the children of the children, leaving in existence neither the products of the soil nor the offspring of living beings – for instance, submergence of land, earthquakes, destructive storms, military expeditions of one people against others in order to exterminate the latter by the sword and to efface all traces of them. Many of these actions would proceed from one of us in reference to another only because of a violent anger or a great hatred or a desire for vengeance. With reference to these actions He is called *jealous and avenging and keeping anger and wrathful*,[20] meaning that actions similar to those that proceed from us from a certain aptitude of the soul – namely, jealousy, holding fast to vengeance, hatred, or anger – proceed from Him, may He be exalted, because of the deserts of those who are punished, and not because of any passion whatever, may He be exalted above every deficiency. Similarly all [His] actions are such as resemble the actions proceeding from the Adamites on account of passions and aptitudes of the soul, but they by no means proceed from Him, may He be exalted, on account of a notion superadded to His essence. It behooves the governor of a city, if he is a prophet, to acquire similarity to these attributes, so that these actions may proceed from him according to a determined measure and according to the deserts of the people who are affected by them and not merely because of his following a passion. He should not let loose the reins of anger nor let | passion gain mastery over him, for all passions are evil; but, on the contrary, he should guard against them as far as this lies within the capacity of man. Sometimes, with regard to some people, he should be *merciful and gracious*, not out of mere compassion and pity, but in accordance with what is fitting. Sometimes, with regard to some people, he should be *keeping anger and jealous and avenging* in accordance with their deserts, not out of mere anger; so he may order an individual to be burned without being angry and incensed with him and without hating him, because he perceives the deserts of that individual and considers the great benefit that many people will derive from the accomplishment of the action in question. Do you not see in the texts of the *Torah*, when it commanded the extermination of the *seven nations* and said *thou shalt save alive nothing that*

18. Literally: matter.
19. Or: an entire climate. I.e., one of the seven climates into which the earth was divided.
20. Cf. Nah. 1:2.

breatheth,[21] that it immediately follows this by saying: *That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods and so ye sin against the Lord your God?*[22] Thus it says: do not think that this is hard-heartedness or desire for vengeance. It is rather an act required by human opinion, which considers that everyone who deviates from the ways of truth[23] should be put an end to and that all the obstacles impeding the achievement of the perfection that is the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, should be interdicted. In spite of all this, it behooves that acts of mercy, forgiveness, pity, and commiseration should proceed from the governor of a city to a much greater extent than acts of retaliation. For the *thirteen characteristics* are all of them, with one exception, *characteristics of mercy* – the exception being: *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*.[24] For it says: *And that will by no means clear the guilty*.[25] The meaning is: and He will not utterly destroy – an interpretation deriving from the words: *And utterly destroyed, she shall sit upon the ground*.[26] Know that his speech – *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children* – only applies to the sin of *idolatry* in particular and not to any other sin. A proof of this is His saying | in *the ten commandments: unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me*.[27] For only *an idolater* is called *hater: for every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth*.[28] He restricts Himself to the *fourth generation* only because the utmost of what man can see of his offspring is the *fourth generation*. Accordingly, when the people of an *idolatrous* city are killed, this means that an *idolatrous* old man and the offspring of the offspring of his offspring – that, is, the child of the fourth generation – are killed. Accordingly Scripture, as it were, predicated of Him that His commandments, may He be exalted, which undoubtedly are comprised in His actions, comprise the commandment to kill the offspring of *idolaters*, even if they are little children, together with the multitude[29] of their fathers and grandfathers. We find this commandment continuously in the *Torah* in all passages. Thus he commands with regard to the *city that has been led astray* to idolatry: *Destroy it utterly and all that is therein*[30] – all this being done with a view to blotting out traces that bring about necessarily great corruption, as we have made clear.

We have gone beyond the subject of this chapter; however, we have made clear why Scripture, in enumerating His actions, has confined itself

21. Deut. 20:16. 22. Deut. 20:18. 23. *al-ḥaqq*. The word may also mean "God."
24. Exod. 34:7. 25. Exod. 34:7. 26. Isa. 3:26. 27. Exod. 20:5. 28. Deut. 12:31.
29. *fī ghumār* or *fī ghimār*. The latter reading may also have the meaning "in the calamity."
30. Deut. 13:16.

here to those mentioned above, and that those actions are needed for the governance of cities. For the utmost virtue of man is to become like unto Him, may He be exalted, as far as he is able; which means that we should make our actions like unto His, as the Sages made clear when interpreting the verse, *Ye shall be holy*.[31] They said: *He is gracious, so be you also gracious; He is merciful, so be you also merciful*.[32] The purpose of all this is to show that the attributes ascribed to Him are attributes of His actions and that they do not mean that He possesses qualities.[33]

CHAPTER 55

It has already been said before in a number of passages of this Treatise that | anything that entails corporeality ought of necessity to be negated in reference to Him and that all affections likewise should be negated in reference to Him. For all affections entail change, and moreover the agent who effects those affections is undoubtedly not identical with him who is acted upon [or affected]. Accordingly if He, may He be exalted, were subject to affection in any respect whatever, someone other than He would act upon Him and effect change in Him. Likewise all privation ought of necessity to be negated in reference to Him; it should be negated that He sometimes lacks a certain perfection, while that at other times it exists in Him. For if this should be supposed, He would be only potentially perfect. Now privation is necessarily attached to all potentiality, and everything that passes from potentiality to actuality cannot but require some other thing existing in actuality that causes the former to pass to actuality. For this reason, all His perfections must exist in actuality, and nothing may belong to Him that exists potentially in any respect whatever. One must likewise of necessity deny, with reference to Him, His being similar to any existing thing. Everyone has already been aware of this; clear statements are made in the books of the prophets negating the conception that He is like any thing. He says: *To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal?*[1] He says: *To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?*[2] He says: *There is none like unto Thee, O Lord*.[3] This occurs frequently. The basis of the matter is that anything that leads to one of

31. Lev. 19:2. 32. Siphre to Deut. 10:12. 33. Literally: quality.
1. Isa. 40:25. 2. Isa. 40:18. 3. Jer. 10:6.

these four kinds of attributions ought of necessity to be negated in reference to Him by means of a clear demonstration; namely, anything that leads to attributing to Him corporeality, or that leads to attributing to Him affection and change, or that leads to attributing to Him, for example, a statement that He has not something in actuality and thereafter this occurs to Him in actuality, or that leads to attributing to Him a likeness to a thing among His creatures.

These are some of the useful teachings of natural science with regard to the knowledge of the deity. For he who has no knowledge of these sciences is not aware of the deficiency inherent in affections, and does not understand the meaning | of what is potential and of what is in actuality, and does not know that privation attaches necessarily to everything potential and that what is potential is more deficient than that which is in motion —because in the latter case potentiality is passing into actuality—while that which is in motion is in its turn deficient in comparison[4] to that for the sake of which it moves until it achieves actuality. And even if such a one[5] knows these things, he does not know them through their demonstrations. Accordingly he does not know the particular corollaries following necessarily from these universal primary propositions. For this reason he does not have at his disposal a demonstration of the existence of God or one of the necessity[6] of negating these kinds of attributions in reference to Him.

Having made this introduction, I will start upon another chapter in which I will make clear the absurdity of what is thought by those who believe that He has essential attributes. But that can be understood only by someone who already possesses knowledge of the art of logic and of the nature of being.

4. Literally: in its relation.
5. One who has not studied science.
6. *luzūm*. The word means here logical or scientific necessity.

CHAPTER 56

Know that likeness is a certain relation between two things and that in cases where no relation can be supposed to exist between two things, no likeness between them can be represented to oneself. Similarly in all cases in which there is no likeness between two things, there is no relation between them. An example of this is that one does not say that this heat is like this color, or that this voice is like this sweetness. This is a matter that is clear in itself. Accordingly, in view of the fact that the relation between us and Him, may He be exalted, is considered as nonexistent—I mean the relation between Him and that which is other than He—it follows necessarily that likeness between Him and us should also be considered nonexistent.

Know also that any two things that fall under the same species[1]—I mean to say thereby that their essences | are the same—even if these things differ in regard to bigness and smallness or strength and feebleness or in other similar ways, are all of them necessarily alike even if they differ in this kind of way. An example of this is that a mustard grain and the sphere of the fixed stars are alike in having three dimensions; even though the latter is exceedingly big and the former exceedingly small, the notion of the existence of the dimensions in both of them is the same. Similarly wax melted in sunshine and the element of fire are alike in respect to heat; even though this heat is very intense in the latter and very feeble in the former, the notion of the appearance of this quality in both of them is the same.

Similarly it behooves those who believe that there are essential attributes that may be predicated of the Creator—namely, that He is existent, living, possessing power, knowing, and willing—to understand that these notions are not ascribed to Him and to us in the same sense. According to what they think, the difference between these attributes and ours lies in the former being greater, more perfect, more permanent, or more durable than ours, so that His existence is more durable than our existence, His life more permanent than our life, His power greater than our power, His knowledge more perfect than our knowledge, and His will more universal than our will. In this way both notions[2] would be, as they think, included in the same definition. However, the matter is not so in any respect. For the comparative is used only with regard to things in reference to which the

1. The word *naw*^{c} (species) seems to be used here in a rather loose sense.
2. That of a divine attribute and that of a human one designated by the same term.

notion in question is used univocally. And if this is so, there is necessarily a likeness between the things in question. According to the opinion of those who consider that there are essential attributes, His | essential attributes, may He be exalted, in the existence of which they believe, must not be like the attributes of other beings and must not be comprised in the same definition, just as His essence, may He be exalted, is necessarily not like other essences. However, they do not act upon this opinion. Rather do they think that the divine and human attributes are comprised in the same definition, however clear it is to all those who understand the meaning of being alike that the term "existent" is predicated of Him, may He be exalted, and of everything that is other than He, in a purely equivocal sense. Similarly the terms "knowledge," "power," "will," and "life," as applied to Him, may He be exalted, and to all those possessing knowledge, power, will, and life, are purely equivocal, so that their meaning when they are predicated of Him is in no way like their meaning in other applications. Do not deem that they are used amphibolously. For when terms are used amphibolously they are predicated of two things between which there is a likeness in respect to some notion, which notion is an accident attached to both of them and not a constituent element of the essence of each one of them. Now the things attributed to Him, may He be exalted, are not accidents in the opinion of anyone among the men engaged in speculation, while, on the other hand, all the attributes belonging to us are accidents according to the opinion of the Mutakallimūn. Would that I knew accordingly whence the likeness could come so that the divine and the human attributes could be comprised in the same definition and be used in a univocal sense, as these people believe.

Accordingly this is a cogent demonstration that the meaning of the qualificative attributions ascribed to Him and the meaning of the attributions known to us have nothing in common in any respect or in any mode; these attributions have in common only the name and nothing else. This being so, you must not believe that there exist in Him notions superadded to His essence that are like the attributes that are superadded to our essence, because the name is common. The conception is of immense sublimity according to those who know. Keep it in memory and realize its true meaning so that it be ready to hand with a view to what we wish to make you understand. |

CHAPTER 57

On the attributes; more obscure than what preceded. It is known that existence is an accident attaching to what exists. For this reason it is something that is superadded to the quiddity of what exists. This is clear and necessary with regard to everything the existence of which has a cause. Hence its existence is something that is superadded to its quiddity.

As for that which has no cause for its existence, there is only God, may He be magnified and glorified, who is like that. For this is the meaning of our saying about Him, may He be exalted, that His existence is necessary. Accordingly, His existence is identical with His essence and His true reality, and His essence is His existence. Thus His essence does not have an accident attaching to it when it exists, in which case its existence would be a notion that is superadded to it. For His existence is necessary always; it is not something that may come suddenly to Him nor an accident that may attain Him. Consequently He exists, but not through an existence other than His essence; and similarly He lives, but not through life;[1] He is powerful, but not through power;[2] He knows, but not through knowledge.[3] For all these attributes refer back to one notion in which there is no idea of multiplicity, as will be made clear.

It is likewise necessary to know that oneness and multiplicity are accidents that attain an existent thing with regard to its being many or one. This is made clear in the "Metaphysics." Oneness is not identical with the thing that becomes one, just as number is not identical with the things that are numbered. For all these things[4] are accidents belonging to the genus "discrete quantity," which is attached to the existent things that have the disposition to receive accidents of this kind.

Now to ascribe to Him—whose existence is necessary, who is truly simple, to whom composition cannot attach in any way—the accident of oneness is just as absurd as to ascribe to Him the accident of multiplicity. | I mean to say that oneness is not a notion that is superadded to His essence, but that He is one not through oneness.

These subtle notions that very clearly elude the minds cannot be considered through the instrumentality of the customary words, which are the greatest among the causes leading unto error. For the bounds of expression in all languages are very narrow indeed, so that we cannot represent this

1. Other than His essence. 2. Other than His essence. 3. Other than His essence.
4. I.e., Oneness, number, etc.

notion to ourselves except through a certain looseness of expression. Thus when we wish to indicate that the deity is not many, the one who makes the statement cannot say anything but that He is one, even though "one" and "many" are some of the subdivisions of quantity. For this reason, we give the gist of the notion and give the mind the correct direction toward the true reality of the matter when we say, one but not through oneness, just as we say eternal in order to indicate that He has not come into being in time. For when we say eternal, we speak loosely, as is clear and manifest, since eternal can only be predicated of a thing to which time attaches. Now time is an accident of motion that is attached to a body. And eternal is likewise something correlated. For your saying eternal is said with reference to the accident of time, similar to your saying long and short with reference to that other accident, the line. For with regard to all the things to which the accident time is not attached, it cannot be truly predicated that they are eternal or that they come into being in time—just as it cannot be predicated of sweetness that it is either crooked or straight, and just as it cannot be predicated of sound that it is either salty or insipid. These things are not hidden from one who is trained to understand notions according to their true reality and has considered them with the apprehension that the intellect has of them and in the manner the latter has of stripping them [of accidents and matter], that is, has considered them not merely in the summary fashion of which words are indicative.

All passages that you find in the Scriptures[5] in which it is predicated of Him, may He be exalted, that He is *the First and the Last*[6] are analogous to those in which it is predicated of Him that He has an eye or an ear. The purpose of this is to indicate that He, may He be exalted, | is not subject to change and that no notion is produced in Him anew. It is not meant to indicate that God, may He be exalted, falls under time, so that there would be some analogy between Him and that which is other than He and is in time, so that He would be *the First and the Last.* All these words as applied to Him are *according to the language of the sons of man.* Similarly when we say *one*, the meaning is that He has no equal and not that the notion of oneness attaches to His essence.

5. Literally: books. 6. Cf., e.g., Isa. 44:6.

CHAPTER 58

More obscure than what preceded. Know that the description of God, may He be cherished and exalted, by means of negations is the correct description—a description that is not affected by an indulgence in facile language and does not imply any deficiency with respect to God in general or in any particular mode. On the other hand, if one describes Him by means of affirmations, one implies, as we have made clear, that He is associated with that which is not He and implies a deficiency in Him. I must make it clear to you in the first place how negations are in a certain respect attributes and how they differ from the affirmative attributes. After that I shall make it clear to you that we have no way of describing Him unless it be through negations and not otherwise.

I shall say accordingly that an attribute does not particularize any object of which it is predicated in such a way that it is not associated by virtue of that particular attribute with other things. On the contrary, the attribute is sometimes attributed to the object of which it is predicated in spite of the fact that the latter has it in common with other things and is not particularized through it. For instance, if you would see a man at some distance and if you would ask: What is this thing that is seen? and were told: This is a living being—this affirmation would indubitably be an attribute predicated of the thing seen though it does not particularize the latter, distinguishing it from everything else. However, a certain particularization is achieved through it; namely, it may be learnt from it that the thing seen is not a body belonging to | the species[1] of plants or to that of the minerals. Similarly if there were a man in this house and you knew that some body is in it without knowing what it is and would ask, saying: What is in this house? and the one who answered you would say: There is no mineral in it and no body of a plant—a certain particularization would be achieved and you would know that a living being is in the house though you would not know which animal. Thus the attributes of negation have in this respect something in common with the attributes of affirmation, for the former undoubtedly bring about some particularization even if the particularization due to them only exists in the exclusion of what has been

1. *naw*ᶜ means "species" and not "genus." At first blush the latter term would seem more suitable.

negated from the sum total of things that we had thought of as not being negated. Now as to the respect in which the attributes of negation differ from the attributes of affirmation: The attributes of affirmation, even if they do not particularize, indicate a part of the thing the knowledge of which is sought, that part being either a part of its substance or one of its accidents; whereas the attributes of negation do not give us knowledge in any respect whatever of the essence the knowledge of which is sought, unless this happens by accident as in the example we have given.

After this preface, I shall say that it has already been demonstrated that God, may He be honored and magnified, is existent of necessity and that there is no composition in Him, as we shall demonstrate, and that we are only able to apprehend the fact that He is and cannot apprehend His quiddity.[2] It is consequently impossible that He should have affirmative attributes. For He has no "That" outside of His "What," and hence an attribute cannot be indicative of one of the two; all the more His "What is not compound so that an attribute cannot be indicative of its two parts; and all the more, He cannot have accidents so that an attribute cannot be indicative of them. Accordingly He cannot have an affirmative attribute in any respect.

As for the negative attributes, they are those that must be used in order to conduct the mind toward that which must be believed with regard to Him, may He be exalted, for no | notion of multiplicity can attach to Him in any respect on account of them; and, moreover, they conduct the mind toward the utmost reach that man may attain in the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted. For instance, it has been demonstrated to us that it is necessary that something exists other than those essences apprehended by means of the senses and whose knowledge is encompassed by means of the intellect. Of this thing we say that it exists, the meaning being that its nonexistence is impossible. We apprehend further that this being is not like the being of the elements, for example, which are dead bodies. We say accordingly that this being is living, the meaning being that He, may He be exalted, is not dead. We apprehend further that this being is not like the being of the heaven, which is a living body. We say accordingly that He is not a body. We apprehend further that this being is not like the being of the intellect, which is neither a body nor dead, but is caused. We say accordingly that He, may He be exalted, is eternal, the meaning being that

2. The statements regarding God are considered in this sentence as already demonstrated and as to be demonstrated later. This inconsistency, which may of course be explained away, cannot but strike the reader of this sentence.

He has no cause that has brought Him into existence. We apprehend further that the existence of this being, which is its essence, suffices not only for His being existent, but also for many other existents flowing from it, and that this overflow – unlike that of heat from fire and unlike the proceeding of light from the sun – is an overflow that, as we shall make clear, constantly procures for those existents duration and order by means of wisely contrived[3] governance. Accordingly we say of Him, because of these notions, that He is powerful and knowing and willing. The intention in ascribing these attributes to Him is to signify that He is neither powerless nor ignorant nor inattentive nor negligent. Now the meaning of our saying that He is not powerless is to signify that His existence suffices for the bringing into existence of things other than He. The meaning of our saying that He is not ignorant is to signify that He apprehends – that is, is living, for every apprehending thing is living. And the meaning of our saying that He is not inattentive or negligent is to signify that all the existent things in question proceed from their cause according to a certain order | and governance – not in a neglected way so as to be generated as chance would have it, but rather as all the things are generated that a willing being governs by means of purpose and will. We apprehend further that no other thing is like that being. Accordingly our saying that He is one signifies the denial of multiplicity.

It has thus become clear to you that every attribute that we predicate of Him is an attribute of action or, if the attribute is intended for the apprehension of His essence and not of His action, it signifies the negation of the privation of the attribute in question. Moreover, even those negations are not used with reference to or applied to Him, may He be exalted, except from the following point of view, which you know: one sometimes denies with reference to a thing something that cannot fittingly exist in it. Thus we say of a wall that it is not endowed with sight. Now you who read this Treatise with speculative intent know that whereas this heaven is a moving body of which we have measured the cubits and inches and in regard to which we have moreover achieved knowledge of the dimension of certain of its parts and of most of its movements, our intellects are quite incapable of apprehending its quiddity. And this, in spite of our knowing that it has of necessity matter and form, for its matter is not like that which is in us. For this reason we are unable to predicate of it any attributes

3. *muḥkam* may only mean "well-arranged." However, Maimonides probably wished the reader to remember the fact that the Arabic term derives from a root from which the word *ḥikma* (wisdom) and other words having a similar meaning also derive.

except in terms whose meaning is not completely understood, but not by means of affirmations that are completely understood. Accordingly we say that the heavens are neither light nor heavy nor acted upon and consequently not receptive to external impressions, that they have no taste and no smell; and we make other negations of this kind. All this is due to our ignorance with regard to that matter.

What then should be the state of our intellects when they aspire to apprehend Him who is without matter and is simple to the utmost degree of simplicity, Him whose existence is necessary, Him who has no cause and to whom no notion attaches that is superadded to His essence, which is perfect—the meaning of its perfection being, as we have made clear, that all deficiencies are negated with respect to it— | we who only apprehend the fact that He is? There is accordingly an existent whom none of the existent things that He has brought into existence resembles, and who has nothing in common with them in any respect; in reference to whom there is no multiplicity or incapacity to bring into existence things other than He; whose relation to the world is that of a captain to his ship. Even this is not the true relation and a correct likeness, for this likeness has been used in order to lead the mind toward the view that He, may He be exalted, governs the existent things, the meaning of this being that He procures their existence and watches over their order as it ought to be watched over. This notion will be made clear more completely than it is here.

Glory then to Him who is such that when the intellects contemplate His essence, their apprehension turns into incapacity; and when they contemplate the proceeding of His actions from His will, their knowledge turns into ignorance; and when the tongues aspire to magnify Him by means of attributive qualifications, all eloquence turns into weariness and incapacity!

CHAPTER 59

Someone may ask and say: If there is no device leading to the apprehension of the true reality of His essence and if demonstration proves that it can only be apprehended that He exists and that it is impossible, as has been demonstrated, to ascribe to Him affirmative attributes, in what respect can there be superiority or inferiority between those who apprehend Him? If, however, there is none, *Moses our Master* and *Solomon* did not

apprehend anything different from what a single individual among the pupils apprehends, and there can be no increase in this knowledge.

Now it is generally accepted by the men of the Law, nay even by the philosophers, that there exist numerous differences of degree in this respect. Know, therefore, that this is indeed so and that the differences of degree between those who apprehend are very great indeed. For the thing of which | attributes are predicated becomes more particularized with every increase in attributes that are predicated of it, and he who predicates these attributes accordingly comes nearer to the apprehension of the true reality of the thing in question. In a similar way, you come nearer to the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, with every increase in the negations regarding Him; and you come nearer to that apprehension than he who does not negate with regard to Him that which, according to what has been demonstrated to you, must be negated. For this reason a man sometimes labors for many years in order to understand some science and to gain true knowledge of its premises so that he should have certainty with regard to this science, whereas the only conclusion from this science in its entirety consists in our negating with reference to God some notion of which it has been learnt by means of a demonstration that it cannot possibly be ascribed to God. To someone else who falls short in his knowledge of speculation, this demonstration will not be clear; and he will consider it doubtful whether or not this notion exists with reference to God. Again another one belonging to those who are struck with intellectual blindness ascribes to Him that notion which has been demonstrated should rather be negated with reference to Him. For instance, I shall demonstrate that He is not a body, whereas another man will doubt and not know whether or not He is a body, and a third one will categorically decide that He is a body and will seek to approach[1] God by means of this belief. How great is the difference between the three individuals! The first is undoubtedly nearer to God, while the second is far away from Him, and the third still farther away. Similarly if we may suppose a fourth one to whom the impossibility of affections in Him, may He be exalted, has become clear by demonstration — whereas this was not the case with regard to the first one who denied His corporeality — this fourth individual would undoubtedly be nearer to God than the first. And so on always; so that if an individual exists to whom it has been made clear by demonstration that many things, whose existence with reference to Him or whose proceeding from Him we hold possible, are, on the contrary, impossible with reference to Him, may He be exalted

1. Literally: meet.

— and this applies of course all the more if we believe that these things are necessarily attached to Him — that individual will undoubtedly be more perfect than we.

It has accordingly become manifest to you that in every case in which the demonstration that a certain thing should be negated with reference to Him becomes clear to you, you become more perfect, | and that in every case in which you affirm of Him an additional thing, you become one who likens Him to other things and you get further away from the knowledge of His true reality. It is from this point of view that one ought to come nearer to an apprehension of Him by means of investigation and research: namely, in order that one should know the impossibility of everything that is impossible with reference to Him — not in order that one should make an affirmation ascribing to Him a thing as being a notion superadded to His essence or because the notion in question is held to be a perfection with reference to Him, since one finds it a perfection with reference to us. For all perfections are habitus, and not every habitus can exist in every being possessing habitus. Know that when you make an affirmation ascribing another thing to Him, you become more remote from Him in two respects: one of them is that everything you affirm is a perfection only with reference to us, and the other is that He does not possess a thing other than His essence, which, as we have made clear, is identical with His perfections.

As everyone is aware that it is not possible, except through negation, to achieve an apprehension of that which is in our power to apprehend and that, on the other hand, negation does not give knowledge in any respect of the true reality of the thing with regard to which the particular matter in question has been negated — all men, those of the past and those of the future, affirm clearly that God, may He be exalted, cannot be apprehended by the intellects, and that none but He Himself can apprehend what He is, and that apprehension of Him consists in the inability to attain the ultimate term in apprehending Him. Thus all the philosophers say: We are dazzled by His beauty, and He is hidden from us because of the intensity with which He becomes manifest, just as the sun is hidden to eyes that are too weak to apprehend it. This has been expatiated upon in words that it would serve no useful purpose to repeat here. The most apt phrase concerning this subject is the dictum occurring in the *Psalms*, *Silence is praise to Thee*,[2] which interpreted signifies: silence with regard to You is praise. This is a most perfectly put phrase regarding this matter. For of whatever we say intending to magnify and exalt, on the one hand we find that it can have

2. Ps. 65:2.

some application to Him, may He be exalted, and on the other we perceive | in it some deficiency. Accordingly, silence and limiting oneself to the apprehensions of the intellects are more appropriate – just as the perfect ones have enjoined when they said: *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*[3]

You also know their famous dictum – would that all dicta were like it. I shall quote it to you textually, even though it is well remembered,[4] so as to draw your attention to the various significations it expresses. They have said:[5] *Someone who came into the presence of Rabbi Ḥaninah said [in prayer]: God the Great, the Valiant, the Terrible, the Mighty, the Strong, the Tremendous, the Powerful. Thereupon [Rabbi Ḥaninah] said to him: Have you finished all the praises of your Master? Even as regards the first three epithets [used by you] we could not have uttered them if Moses our Master had not pronounced them in the Law*[6] *and if the men of the Great Synagogue had not [subsequently] come and established [their use] in prayer. And you come and say all this. What does this resemble? It is as if a mortal king who had millions of gold pieces were praised for possessing silver. Would this not be an offense to him?* Here ends the dictum of this perfect one. Consider in the first place his reluctance and unwillingness to multiply the affirmative attributes. Consider also that he has stated clearly that if we were left only to our intellects we should never have mentioned these attributes or stated a thing appertaining to them. Yet the necessity to address men in such terms as would make them achieve some representation – in accordance with the dictum of the Sages: *The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of man*[7] – obliged resort to predicating of God their own perfections when speaking to them. It must then be our purpose to draw a line at using these expressions and not to apply them to Him except only in reading the *Torah*. However, as[8] the *men of the Great Synagogue*, who were prophets, appeared in their turn and inserted the mention of these attributes in the prayer, it is our purpose to pronounce only these attributes when saying our prayers. According to the spirit, this dictum makes it clear that, as it happened, two necessary obligations determined our naming these attributes in | our prayers: one of them is that they occur in the *Torah*, and the other is that the prophets in question used them in the prayer they composed. Accordingly, we should not have mentioned these attributes at all

3. Ps. 4:5.
4. Well remembered, or well preserved. Ibn Tibbon translates: well known.
5. B.T., Berakhoth, 33b. 6. Cf. Deut. 10:17.
7. B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Meṣi'a, 31b. 8. Literally: when.

but for the first necessary obligation; and but for the second necessity, we should not have taken them out of their context and should not have had recourse to them in our prayers.[9] As you continue to consider the attributes, it will become clear to you from this statement that we are not permitted in our prayers to use and to cite all the attributes ascribed to God in the books of the prophets. For [Rabbi Ḥaninah] not only says:[10] *If Moses our Master had not pronounced them, we could not have uttered them*, but poses a second condition: *And if the men of the Great Synagogue had not* [*subsequently*] *come and established* [*their use*] *in prayer* — whereupon we are permitted to use them in our prayers.

Thus what we do is not like what is done by the truly ignorant who spoke at great length and spent great efforts on prayers that they composed and on sermons that they compiled and through which they, in their opinion, came nearer to God. In these prayers and sermons they predicate of God qualificative attributions that, if predicated of a human individual, would designate a deficiency in him. For they do not understand those sublime notions that are too strange for the intellects of the vulgar and accordingly took God, may He be magnified and glorified, for an object of study for their tongues; they predicated attributes of Him and addressed Him in all the terms that they thought permitted and expatiated at such length in this way that in their thoughts they made Him move on account of an affection. They did this especially when they found the text of a prophet's speech regarding these terms. Thereupon they had full license to bring forward texts that ought to be interpreted in every respect, and to take them according to their external meaning, to derive from them inferences and secondary conclusions, and to found upon them various kinds of discourses. This kind of license is frequently taken by poets and preachers or such as think that what they speak is poetry, so that the utterances of some of them constitute an absolute denial of faith, while other utterances contain such rubbish and such perverse imaginings | as to make men laugh when they hear them, on account of the nature of these utterances, and to make them weep when they consider that these utterances are applied to God, may He be magnified and glorified. If I were not unwilling to set out the deficiencies of those who make these utterances, I should have quoted to you something of the latter in order that you should give heed to the points in which they may be impugned. However, the deficiencies in these utterances are most manifest to him who understands. It also behooves you to consider and say that in view of the fact that *speaking ill* and *defamation*

9. Literally: prayer. 10. B.T., Berakhoth, 33b.

are acts of great disobedience, how much all the more so is the loosening of the tongue with regard to God, may He be exalted, and the predicating of Him qualificative attributions above which He is exalted. But I shall not say that this is an act of disobedience, but rather that it constitutes *unintended obloquy and vituperation* on the part of the multitude who listen to these utterances and on the part of the ignoramus who pronounces them. As for him who apprehends the deficiency of those speeches and yet uses those speeches, he belongs in my opinion to the category of people of whom it is said, *And the children of Israel did impute things that were not right unto the Lord their God,*[11] and is said elsewhere, *And to utter error against the Lord.*[12] Accordingly if you are one *who has regard for the honor of his Creator,*[13] you ought not to listen in any way to these utterances, let alone give expression to them and still less make up others like them. For you know the extent of the sin of him who *makes vituperative utterances against what is above.*[14] You accordingly ought not to set forth in any respect the attributes of God in an affirmative way—with a view, as you think, to magnifying Him—and ought not to go beyond that which has been inserted in the prayers and *benedictions* by the *men of the Great Synagogue.* For this is sufficient from the point of view of necessity; in fact, as *Rabbi Ḥaninah* said, it is amply sufficient. But regarding the other attributes that occur in the books of the prophets and are recited during the perusal of these books, it is believed, as we have made clear, that they are attributes of action or that they indicate the negation of their nonexistence in God. This notion concerning them also should not be divulged to the vulgar. For this kind of | speculation is more suitable for the elite who consider that the magnification of God does not consist in their saying improper things but in their understanding properly.

Hereupon I shall return to completing the indications concerning the dictum of *Rabbi Ḥaninah* and to giving it correct interpretation. He does not say, for example: *What does this resemble? It is as if a mortal king*[15] *who had millions of gold pieces were praised for possessing one hundred pieces.* For this example would have indicated that the perfections of Him, may He be exalted, while more perfect than the perfections that are ascribed to Him, still belong to the same species as the latter. As we have demonstrated, this is not so. But the wisdom manifest in this parable lies in his saying: *gold pieces and were praised for possessing silver.* He says this in

11. II Kings 17:9. 12. Isa. 32:6. 13. Or: *Owner.*
14. Cf. B.T., Sukkah, 23; B.T., Taʿanith, 25.
15. Literally: *a king who is flesh and blood.*

order to indicate that in God, may He be exalted, there is nothing belonging to the same species as the attributes that are regarded by us as perfections, but that all these attributes are deficiencies with regard to God, just as he made clear in this parable when he said: *Would this not be an offense to Him?* I have then already made it known to you that everything in these attributes that you regard as a perfection is a deficiency with regard to Him, may He be exalted, as it belongs to a species to which the things that are with us belong. *Solomon*, peace be on him, has rightly directed us with regard to this subject, in words that should be sufficient for us, when he said: *For God is in heaven and thou upon the earth; therefore let thy words be few.*[16]

CHAPTER 60

I wish to tell you in this chapter parables by means of which you will be able to add to your representation of the necessity to multiply His attributes by means of negations and also to add to your shrinking from the belief in positive attributes regarding Him, may He be exalted.

Assume that a man has acquired true knowledge regarding the existence of a ship, but does not know | to what it is that this term is applied: namely, whether it is applied to a substance or to an accident. Then it became clear to some other individual that a ship is not an accident; afterwards it became clear to yet another individual that it is not a mineral; then it became clear to someone else that it is not a living being; then it became clear to someone else that it is not a plant forming a continuum with the earth; then it became clear to someone else that it is not one body naturally forming a continuum; then it became clear to someone else that it does not possess a simple shape as do tables and doors; then it became clear to someone else that it is not a sphere, and to another individual that it is not conical, and to yet another individual that it is not spherical and not possessed of equal sides, and to someone else again that it is not solid all through. Now it is clear that the last individual has nearly achieved, by means of these negative attributes, the representation of the ship as it is. He has, as it were, attained equality with one who has represented the ship as being a body consisting of timber, a body that is hollow, oblong, and

16. Eccles. 5:1.

composed of a number of pieces of timber; that is, he has attained equality with one who has represented the ship by means of affirmative attributes. As for those whom we have cited in the parable as being prior to him, every one of them is more remote from representing the ship to himself than the one who comes after him; thus the first one figuring in our parable knows nothing but the bare term alone. Accordingly the negative attributes make you come nearer in a similar way to the cognition and apprehension of God, may He be exalted. Desire then wholeheartedly that you should know by demonstration some additional thing to be negated, but do not desire to negate merely in words. For on every occasion on which it becomes clear to you by means of a demonstration that a thing whose existence is thought to pertain to Him, may He be exalted, should rather be negated with reference to Him, you undoubtedly come nearer to Him by one degree. In this respect there are people who are very near to Him, whereas others are extremely far away from Him – not that there is in this matter a local nearness so that one may come nearer or get farther away from Him, as is thought by those whose | mental eyes are blind. Understand this well and know it and rejoice therein. For the way has become clear to you by walking in which you may come near to Him, may He be exalted. Walk accordingly therein if you so wish.

On the other hand, the predication of affirmative attributes of Him, may He be exalted, is very dangerous. For it has been already demonstrated that anything that we think of as a perfection – even if it existed as pertaining to Him – in accordance with the opinion of those who believe in the attributes, nevertheless would not belong to the species of perfection that we think of,[1] save only by equivocation, just as we have made clear.[2] Accordingly you must of necessity go over to the notion of negation. For if you say that, with one knowledge and with this changeless knowledge that has no multiplicity in it, He knows the multiple and changeable things that are constantly being renewed without any renewal of knowledge in Him, and that His knowledge of a thing before it has come into being and after it has acquired reality as existent and after it has ceased to exist is one and the same knowledge in which there is no change, you have clearly stated that He knows with a knowledge that is not like our knowledge. Similarly it follows necessarily that He exists, but not according to the notion of that existence which is in us. Consequently you resort to negations. Accordingly you have not arrived at a knowledge of the true reality of an essential attribute, but you have arrived at multiplicity. For you believe

1. Or: that we think perfection. 2. Cf. I 56.

that He is a certain essence possessing unknown attributes. Now with regard to the attributes that, as you deem, should be affirmed with reference to Him, if you deny that they have a likeness to the attributes known to us, it follows that they do not belong to the same species as the latter. Accordingly the matter of affirmation of attributes has, as it were, withdrawn from you; for if you say God, may He be exalted, is a certain substratum bearing certain things as adjuncts[3] and that this substratum is not like these adjuncts, the utmost of our apprehension would be, on the basis of this belief, polytheism[4] and nothing else. For every substratum bearing things is undoubtedly, | according to its definition, a duality,[5] even if it be one in its existence. For the notion of the substratum is different from that of the adjunct borne by it. Now the demonstration of the impossibility of composition in Him, may He be exalted, and, to go even further, the demonstration of His absolute simplicity, which is extreme and ultimate,[6] will be made clear to you in certain chapters of this Treatise.

I shall not say that he who affirms that God, may He be exalted, has positive attributes either falls short of apprehending Him or is an associator or has an apprehension of Him that is different from what He really is, but I shall say that he has abolished his belief in the existence of the deity without being aware of it. To make this clear: he who falls short of the apprehension of the true reality of some matter is one who apprehends part of it and is ignorant of another part – for instance, someone who apprehends in the notion of man the necessary concomitants of animality and does not apprehend in it the necessary concomitants of rationality. Now there is no multiplicity in the true reality of the existence of God, may He be exalted, so that one thing pertaining to Him might be understood while another remains unknown. In a similar way an associator with reference to a certain thing is one who represents to himself the true reality of a certain essence as this essence veritably is and affirms of another essence that its true reality is like that of the first essence. Now in the opinion of those who think that the attributes in question exist, these attributes are not the essence of the deity, but rather notions superadded to the essence. Furthermore, one who has an apprehension of a thing that is different from what that thing really is, must yet necessarily apprehend something of it as it really is. However, I shall not say of him who represents to himself that taste is a quantity, that his representation of the thing is different from what the latter really is;

3. A more literal translation would be: upon which certain borne things are superposed.
4. Literally: associationism. 5. Literally: is undoubtedly two.
6. Literally: in the uttermost extremity.

rather I shall say that he is ignorant of the being of taste and does not know to what the term applies. This is a very subtle speculation; understand it.

In accordance with this elucidation you shall know that he is incapable of apprehending the deity and is far removed from knowledge of Him who has no clear understanding of the necessity of negating with respect to God a notion negated by someone else on the basis of a demonstration. And, as we have made clear in the beginning of this chapter, the fewer | negations there are on his part, the more his apprehension falls short.

As for one who affirms an attribute of Him without knowing a thing about it except the mere term, it may be considered that the object to which he imagines the term applies is a nonexistent notion—an invention that is false; for he has, as it were, applied this term to a notion lacking existence, as nothing in existence is like that notion. An example is that of a man who has heard the term elephant and knows that it is an animal and demands to know its shape and true reality. Thereupon one who is himself mistaken or who misleads others tells him that it is an animal possessing one leg and three wings, inhabiting the depths of the sea, having a transparent body and a broad face like that of man in its form and shape, talking like a man, and sometimes flying in the air, while at other times swimming like a fish. I will not say that this representation of the elephant differs from what the latter really is, nor that the man in question falls short in his apprehension of the elephant. But I shall say that the thing that he has imagined as having these attributes[7] is merely an invention and is false and that there is nothing in existence like that, but that it is a thing lacking existence to which a term signifying an existent thing has been applied—a thing like "anqā mughrib"[8] or a centaur and other imaginary forms of this kind to which a term simple[9] or compound, signifying some existent thing, has been applied. In the present case the matter is similar and of the same kind.[10] For God, may His praise be magnified, is an existent whose existence has been demonstrated to be necessary. And, as I shall demonstrate,[11] from His being the necessarily existent there necessarily follows His absolute simplicity.

As for thinking that this simple essence—whose existence, as has been said, is necessary—is endowed with attributes and with other notions accompanying it: the thing thus imagined cannot, as has been demonstrated, be existent in any respect. Accordingly, if we say that | this essence, which

7. Literally: this attribute. 8. A fabulous bird.
9. Literally: one. Ibn Tibbon translates: simple.
10. Literally: equal. 11. Cf. II 1.

for the sake of example shall be called deity, is an essence in which subsist many notions that are predicated of it, we apply this term[12] to absolute nonexistence. Consider accordingly how great is the danger in affirming with reference to Him [positive] attributes. Accordingly it behooves us to believe with regard to the attributes figuring in the revealed books or the books of the prophets that all of them are mentioned only to direct the mind toward nothing but His perfection, may He be exalted, or that they are attributes referring to actions proceeding from Him, as we have made clear.

CHAPTER 61

All the names of God, may He be exalted, that are to be found in any of the books derive from actions. There is nothing secret in this matter. The only exception is one name: namely, *Yod, He, Vav, He.* This is the name of God, may He be exalted, that has been originated without any derivation, and for this reason it is called the *articulated name.* This means that this name gives a clear unequivocal indication of His essence, may He be exalted. On the other hand, all the other great names give their indication in an equivocal way, being derived from terms signifying actions the like of which, as we have made clear,[1] exist as our own actions. Even the name that is uttered instead of *Yod, He, Vav, He,* is derived from a term signifying lordship: *The man, the lord* [*'adoni*] *of the land, spoke.*[2] The difference between your saying *'Adoni*—with an "I" vocalization of the *nun*—and your saying [*'*Adonai—with] an *A* vocalization of the *nun*—is analogous to the difference between your saying *Sarri,* which means my chief, and your saying *Sarai, the wife of Abram.*[3] For these words [those having a termination "ai"] are emphatic and of a general character applicable also to other beings. Thus it has been said to an angel: *'Adonai* [*my lord*], *pass not away, I pray thee.*[4]

I have explained | this to you especially with regard to *'Adonai* [which is uttered instead of Y.H.V.H.] because it is the most particularized of the commonly known names of [God], may He be exalted; for in the case of all the others, such as the *Judge,* the *Just,* the *Gracious,* the *Merciful,* and *Elohim,* it is manifest that they are used in a general way as well as

12. Literally: these terms. The term in question appears to be God.
1. Cf. I 54. 2. Gen. 42:30. 3. Gen. 12:17. 4. Gen. 18:3.

that they are derived. As for the *name* that, if pronounced, is composed of *Yod*, *He*, *Vav*, and *He*, no commonly accepted derivation of it is known and none other than He has a part in it. There can be no doubt about the fact that this great name, which as you know is not pronounced except in the *Sanctuary* by the *sanctified Priests of the Lord* and only in *the benediction of the Priests* and by *the High Priest* upon *the day of fasting*, is indicative of a notion with reference to which there is no association between God, may He be exalted, and what is other than He. Perhaps it indicates the notion of a necessary existence,[5] according to the [Hebrew] language, of which we today know only a very scant portion and also with regard to its pronunciation. Generally speaking, the greatness of this name and the prohibition against pronouncing it are due to its being indicative of the essence of Him, may He be exalted, in such a way that none of the created things is associated with Him in this indication. As the Sages, *may their memory be blessed*, have said of it: *My name that is peculiar to Me.*

As for the other names, all of them, because of their being derived, indicate attributes; that is, not an essence alone, but an essence possessing attributes. For this reason they produce in one's fantasy the conception of multiplicity; I mean to say that they produce in one's fantasy the thought that the attributes exist, and that there is an essence and a notion superadded to this essence. For the indications of all derivative terms are such that they indicate a notion and a substratum that is not clearly stated and with which the notion in question is connected. However, as it has been demonstrated that God, may He be exalted, is not a substratum with which some notions are connected, it is known that the derived names are to be understood either with reference to the relation of a certain action to Him or with reference to directing the mind toward His perfection. For this reason | *Rabbi Ḥaninah* would have shrunk from the dictum of Scripture, *the Great, the Valiant, and the Terrible*, were it not for the two necessary obligations mentioned by him. He would have done so because these names produce in one's fantasy the thought of essential attributes; I mean the thought that these names refer to perfections existing in Him. And when the names deriving from the actions pertaining to Him, may He be exalted, were multiplied, they produced in the fantasy of some men the thought that He has many attributes, just as there is a multiplicity of actions from which these names derive. Hence Scripture promises that an apprehension that will put an end to this delusion will come to men. Thus it says: *In that day shall the Lord be one, and His name one*;[6] which means that in the same way

5. Literally: the notion of a necessity of existence. 6. Zech. 14:9.

as He is one, He will be invoked at that time by one name only, by that which is indicative only of the essence and which is not derivative. In the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* they have said: *Before the world was created, there were only the Holy One, blessed be He, and His name.*[7] Consider now how this dictum states clearly that all the derivative names have come into being after the world has come into being. This is correct, for all these names have been laid down[8] so as to correspond to the actions existing in the world. However, if you envisage His essence as it is when divested and stripped of all actions, He no longer has a derived name in any respect whatever, but only one original name that indicates His essence. In fact we have no nonderivative *name* except the one in question, namely, *Yod, He, Vav, He,* which is *the articulated name* simply.

Do not think anything other than this and do not let occur to your mind the vain imaginings of the writers of charms[9] or what names you may hear from them or may find in their stupid books, names that they have invented, which are not indicative of any notion whatsoever, but which they call the *names* and of which they think that they necessitate *holiness and purity* and work miracles. All these are stories that it is not seemly for a perfect man to listen to, | much less to believe. None is called *the articulated name* except the name *having four letters* that is written but not read in accordance with the sounds written down. For the Sages have stated clearly in *Sifre*: *Thus shall ye bless the children of Israel.*[10] *Thus:* [*that is*], *in these words; Thus:* [*that is*], *using the articulated name.* It is also said there: *In the Temple,* [*the name is pronounced*] *as it is written,* [*whereas*] *in* [*the rest of*] *the country the name used to replace it* [*is pronounced instead*]. And in the *Talmud* it is said:[11] *Thus means with the articulated name. And if you ask: With the articulated name or with the name used to replace it? this may be learnt from the words: And they shall put My name*[12]*—that is, My name that is peculiar to Me.* Thus it has become clear to you that *the articulated name* is the *name having four letters* and that it alone is indicative of the essence without associating any other notion with it. For this reason the Sages have said of it that it is the name *that is peculiar to Me.* Now I shall make clear to you what has incited men to the beliefs with regard to the

7. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, III.
8. *wuḍiᶜat.* The terms implied that the names in question were invented and assigned the generally accepted meanings they have.
9. *qamiᶜot;* i.e., holy names, etc., written on a piece of parchment or on paper and used as protective charms.
10. Num. 6:23, and the Sifre on this verse. 11. B.T., Sota, 38a. 12. Num. 6:27.

names, and I will make clear to you the root of this question, and I will strip it of its covering so that nothing doubtful remains, unless you wish to lead yourself astray with reference to a chapter coming after this.

CHAPTER 62

We have received a commandment with regard to the *benediction of Priests* in which *the name of the Lord* figures *as it is written*. This name is *the articulated name*. Now not everybody knew how this name was to be pronounced and how every one of its letters should be vocalized and which of the letters, if any, should be redoubled. Accordingly the men of knowledge have transmitted this, I mean the mode of pronouncing it, but they did not teach it to anyone except *once a week to a worthy scholar*.[1] I believe | that the dictum, *The sages transmit the name having four letters once a week to their sons and their pupils*,[2] refers not only to their teaching the mode of pronouncing this name but also to their making known the notion because of which this name has been originated without any derivation. Accordingly there also would be in this notion a divine secret.

Furthermore, though they used[3] a name having twelve letters, that name was in *sanctity* inferior to the *name having four letters*. In my opinion the most probable supposition is that the name that had twelve letters was not one name but two or three, the sum of the letters of which came to twelve. This name was uttered in all the cases in which the *name having four letters* occurred in the *reading* of Scripture, just as we utter today in the same cases the letters *aleph* and *daleth*. Now this *name* also, namely, that *having twelve letters*, is undoubtedly indicative of a notion more particularly pertaining to God than is the case with regard to what is indicated by *aleph* and *daleth*. But this name was not prohibited and withheld from any of the men of knowledge; on the contrary, everybody who sought to learn this name was taught it. This was not the case with regard to *the name having four letters*. For no one of those knowing it taught it to anyone except *once a week to his son and his pupil*. In consequence, blameworthy people started learning *the name having twelve letters*, and through this corrupted beliefs. This happens whenever anyone who is not a perfect man comes to know that something

1. B.T., Qiddushin, 71a. 2. B.T., Qiddushin, 71a.
3. Literally: a name was with them.

is not as he had imagined it to be in the first place. The Sages therefore made a secret of this *name* likewise, and taught it only to the *discreet among the Priests* that they might use it in giving their benediction to the people in the *Sanctuary*, as they had ceased mentioning *the articulated name* in the *Sanctuary* because of the corruption of the people. They say: *After the death of Simon the Just, his brethren the Priests stopped using the name in giving their benediction;*[4] in giving their benediction they used *the name | having twelve letters.* They also say: *At first the name having twelve letters was transmitted to everyone. [However] when libertines became numerous, it was transmitted only to the discreet among the Priests; and the discreet among the Priests uttered it [in such fashion] that it should be inaudible in the [singing of] melodies by their brethren the [other] Priests. Rabbi Tarphon says: Once I ascended the dais after the father of [my] mother, listened to an [officiating] Priest, and heard that he uttered [the name in question in such fashion] that it should be inaudible in the [singing of] melodies by his brethren the [other] Priests.*[5] They also had a *name having forty-two letters.* Now it is known to everyone capable of mental representation that it is in no way possible that forty-two letters should form one word; these were certainly several words, the number of the letters of which amounted to forty-two. There is no doubt that these words were necessarily indicative of several notions and that these notions came near to a representation of the essence of Him, may He be exalted, in the way we have stated.

These words that had numerous letters were called *name* only because of their being indicative of one notion only, like the other names originated without any derivation. And these words were numerous only with a view to making the notion in question understood. For sometimes many words are used in order to make a single notion understood. Understand this accordingly, and know that that which was taught were the notions indicated by these names and not merely the pronunciation, devoid of all representation, of the letters. The term *articulated name* is never applied to the *name having twelve letters* or to the *name having forty-two letters.* For *the articulated name* is *the name that is peculiar to Him*, as we have made clear, whereas the two others necessarily taught some sort of divine science. The fact that it taught science is proved by | the following dictum on this subject: *The name having forty-two letters is holy and sanctified and is only transmitted to one who is discreet, has reached the middle of his life, is not prone to anger or to drunkenness, does not arouse criticism by his way of life, and speaks agreeably with people. And he who knows it is heedful*

4. Cf. B.T., Yoma, 39b; B.T., Menaḥoth, 109b. 5. B.T., Qiddushin, 71a.

thereof and observes it in purity, is beloved on high and popular below. He is feared by the people, his learning is preserved by him, and he inherits the two worlds, this world and the next.[6] This is literally what the *Talmud* says. How very remote is the way in which this saying is usually understood from the intention of its speaker. For most people think that it deals solely with the pronunciation of letters, and it is not taken into consideration that these letters may have a meaning, so that great things may be acquired through them and that for this reason there is needed the moral preparation and the multiple forming of dispositions that were mentioned. It is clear then that all this is solely instruction in divine notions belonging to the totality of notions that, as we have elucidated, are *mysteries of the Torah.* It has been made clear in the books that have been composed concerning divine science that it is impossible to forget this science; I mean thereby the apprehension of the active intellect; this is the meaning of the dictum of the Sage: *his learning is preserved by him.* When wicked and ignorant people found these texts, they had great scope for lying statements in that they would put together any letters they liked and would say: this is a *name* that has efficacy and the power to operate if it is written down or uttered in a particular way. Thereupon these lies invented by the first wicked and ignorant man were written down, and these writings transmitted to good, pious, and foolish men who lack the scales by means of which they could know the true from the false. These people accordingly made a secret of these writings, and the latter were found in the belongings left behind them, so that they were thought to be correct. To sum it up: | *A fool believes everything.*[7]

We have gone beyond our noble subject and our subtle speculation, turning to speculation designed to invalidate vain imaginings the lack of validity of which is manifest to every beginner in speculation. However the necessity that made us mention the *names* and their meaning and the opinion concerning them that is generally accepted by the vulgar has led us to do so. I shall now return to my subject.

We have already pointed out that all the names of God, may He be exalted, are derived except *the articulated name.* It behooves us to speak of this name, which is *I am that I am,*[8] in a separate chapter as it includes the subtle notion with which we are dealing, I mean the negation of attributes.

6. B.T., Qiddushin, 71a. 7. Prov. 14:15. 8. Exod. 3:14.

CHAPTER 63

We shall begin with an introductory remark. We shall say regarding the saying of [Moses], peace be on him – *And they shall say to me, What is His name? What shall I say unto them?*[1] – why was this question necessarily attached to the matter under discussion so that [Moses] demanded to know how he should answer it? As for his saying, *But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say: the Lord hath not appeared unto thee,*[2] it is very clear that everyone who lays claim to prophecy should be spoken to in this way until he brings proof. Furthermore if the matter concerned, as it may appear, merely a name to be pronounced, there are only two possibilities: namely, that [the Children of] *Israel* already knew this name or that they had never heard it. If it was known to them, [Moses'] telling it would be no argument in his favor,[3] for his knowledge of it would be like their knowledge. If, on the other hand, this name had not been heard among them, what would be the proof of this being the name | of God, supposing that the knowledge of His name were a proof? Besides, after He, may He be exalted, had made known this name to him, He told him: *Go, and gather the elders of Israel together. And they shall hearken to your voice.*[4] There came the answer of [Moses], peace be on him: *But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.*[5] Yet this answer was preceded by His dictum, may He be exalted: *And they shall hearken to your voice;* and it is followed by Him, may He be exalted, saying to [Moses]: *What is that in thy hand? And he said: A rod.*[6] What you should know so that this whole difficulty should be made clear to you is that which I shall tell you.

You know that in those times the teachings of the Sabians were generally accepted and that all except a few men were *idolaters.* I mean by this that they believed in spirits, that they believed that those spirits can be made to descend among men, and that they made talismans. At those times everyone who claimed to be listened to either claimed, like *Abraham,* that speculation and reasoning had come to him indicating to him that the world as a whole has a deity, or else he claimed that the spirit of a star or an angel or something similar had descended upon him. Yet that an individual should make a claim to prophecy on the ground that God had spoken to him and had sent him on a mission was a thing never heard of prior to

1. Exod. 3:13. 2. Exod. 4:1. 3. *ḥujja.* Literally: proof.
4. Exod. 3:16 and 18. 5. Exod. 4:1. 6. Exod. 4:2.

Moses our Master. You should not be led into error on this point by what is said in Scripture with regard to the *Patriarchs*, with reference to whom it is mentioned that God spoke and manifested Himself to them. For you do not find in their cases the kind of prophecy that would have made them call upon people or guide correctly others than themselves, that is, the kind of prophecy that would have made *Abraham* or *Isaac* or *Jacob* or those who preceded them say to people: "God told me: You should act or not act in a certain way"; or: "He has sent me to you." This had never happened before. The Patriarchs were addressed in regard to their private affairs only; I mean only in regard to their perfection, their right guidance concerning their actions, and the good tidings for them concerning the position their descendants would attain. They had addressed a call to people by means of speculation and instruction, as is made clear, in our opinion, | in the passage: *And the soul[s] that they had gotten in Harran.*[7]

Accordingly when God, may He be held sublime and magnified, revealed Himself to *Moses our Master* and ordered him to address a call to people and to convey to them his prophetic mission, [Moses] said: the first thing that they will ask of me is that I should make them acquire true knowledge that there exists a god with reference to the world; after that I shall make the claim that He has sent me. For at that time all the people except a few were not aware of the existence of the deity, and the utmost limits of their speculation did not transcend the sphere, its faculties, and its actions, for they did not separate themselves from things perceived by the senses and had not attained intellectual perfection. Accordingly God made known to [Moses] the knowledge that he was to convey to them and through which they would acquire a true notion of the existence of God, this knowledge being: *I am that I am.*[8] This is a name deriving from the verb *to be* [*hayah*], which signifies existence, for *hayah* indicates the notion: he was. And in Hebrew, there is no difference between your saying: he was, and he existed. The whole secret consists in the repetition in a predicative position of the very word indicative of existence. For the word *that* [in the phrase "I am that I am"] requires the mention of an attribute immediately connected with it. For it is a deficient word requiring a connection with something else; it has the same meaning as alladhī and allatī, the male and female relative pronouns in Arabic. Accordingly the first word is *I am* considered as a term to which a predicate is attached; the second word that is predicated of the first is also *I am*, that is, identical with the first. Accordingly Scripture makes, as it were, a clear statement that the

7. Gen. 12:5. 8. Exod. 3:14.

subject is identical with the predicate. This makes it clear that He is existent not through existence. This notion may be summarized and interpreted in the following way: the existent that is the existent, or the necessarily existent. This is what demonstration necessarily leads to: namely, to the view that there is a necessarily existent thing that has never been, or ever will be, nonexistent. I shall make clear the demonstration of this thesis.

Accordingly when He, may He be exalted, had made known to [Moses] the proofs[9] that would establish His existence among their[10] men of knowledge—this may be inferred from the words that follow: *Go, and gather the elders | of Israel together*[11]—and had promised him that they would understand what I have transmitted and would accept it—this is signified by His words: *And they shall hearken to your voice*[12]—[Moses], peace be on him, posed another question saying: once they have accepted by means of these intellectual demonstrations the view that there is an existent deity, what shall be my proof that this existent deity has sent me? Thereupon he was granted the miracle. Thus it has been made clear that the meaning of his saying, *What is His name?* means only: who is He who you think has sent you? He said, *What is His name?* only with a view to magnifying and exalting [God] in address. He says as it were: no one is ignorant of Your essence and true reality; if, however, I am asked about Your name, what is the meaning indicated by that name? He only thought that it would be a reprehensible thing to say in speaking that there are those who are ignorant of that existent and consequently made out that they were ignorant of His name only and not of that which is signified by that name.

The name *Yah* refers similarly to the notion of the eternity of existence, whereas *Shaddai* derives from the word *day*, meaning a sufficiency. Thus: *For the stuff they had was sufficient* [*dayam*].[13] The letter *shin* [occurring at the beginning of Shaddai] has the meaning *who*, as in *shekbar*.[14] Accordingly the meaning [of Shaddai] is *He who is sufficient*; the intention here being to signify that He does not need other than Himself with reference to the existence of that which He has brought into existence or with reference to prolonging the latter's existence, but that His existence, may He be exalted, suffices for that. Similarly the name *Ḥassin* derives from the

9. A being endowed with intellect cannot but accept the truth of a demonstration. A proof (*dalīl*) does not have this irrefragable character.
10. In the context probably the men of knowledge among the Children of Israel are meant.
11. Exod. 3:16. 12. Exod. 3:18.
13. Exod. 36:7. 14. Eccles. 4:2.

notion of power; thus: *And he was strong* [*ḥason*] *as the oaks.*[15] Similarly the name *Rock* [*ṣur*] applied to Him is equivocal, as we have made clear.[16] Accordingly it has become clear to you that all names are derived or are used equivocally, as *Rock* and others similar to it. He, may He be exalted, has no *name* that is not derivative except the *name having four letters*, which is *the articulated name.* This name is not indicative of an attribute but of simple existence and nothing else. Now absolute existence implies[17] that He shall always be, I mean He who is necessarily existent. Understand the point at which this discourse has finally arrived. |

CHAPTER 64

Know that the *name Y.H.V.H.*[1] sometimes is intended to signify the name exclusively, as in his saying: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;*[2] *And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord.*[3] This occurs innumerable times. The term is sometimes intended to signify the essence and true reality of Him, may He be exalted, as for instance: *And they shall say to me: What is His name?*[4] The term is sometimes intended to signify His commandment, may He be exalted, so that when we say *the name of Y.H.V.H.*[5] it is as if we said *the word of Y.H.V.H.*[6] or *the speech of Y.H.V.H.*,[7] as when Scripture says, *for My name is within him*,[8] which means *My word is within him* or *My speech is within him.* The meaning is that he[9] is an instrument of My will and volition. I shall make this statement clear when speaking of the equivocality of *angel.*[10] Similarly *the glory of Y.H.V.H.*[11] is sometimes intended to signify the created light that God causes to descend in a particular place in order to confer honor upon it in a miraculous way: *And the glory of Y.H.V.H. abode upon Mount Sinai, and* [*the cloud*] *covered it, and so on;*[12] *And the glory of Y.H.V.H. filled the tabernacle.*[13] The expression is sometimes intended to signify His essence and true reality, may He be exalted, as when he says, *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory*,[14] and was answered: *For man shall not see Me and live.*[15]

15. Amos 2:9. 16. Cf. I 16. 17. Literally: includes.
1. In the text "Y.Y." is substituted for "Y.H.V.H." 2. Exod. 20:7.
3. Lev. 24:16. 4. Exod. 3:13. 5. "Y.Y." in the text. 6. "Y.Y." in the text.
7. "Y.Y." in the text. 8. Exod. 23:21. 9. Or: it. I.e., God's word or speech.
10. Cf. II 6 and 32. 11. "Y.Y." in the text. 12. Exod. 24:16. 13. Exod. 40:34.
14. Exod. 33:18. 15. Exod. 33:20.

This answer indicates that the *glory* that is spoken of here is His essence, and that [Moses'] saying *Thy glory* is by way of honoring Him, in the same way as we have made clear[16] with regard to his saying: *And they shall say to me: What is His name? Glory* is sometimes intended to signify the honoring of Him, may He be exalted, by all men. In fact all that is other than God, may He be exalted, honors Him. For the true way of honoring Him consists in apprehending His greatness.[17] Thus everybody who apprehends His greatness and His perfection, honors Him according to the extent of his apprehension. Man in particular honors Him by speeches so that he indicates thereby that which he has apprehended by his intellect and communicates it to others. Those beings that have no apprehension, as for instance the minerals, | also as it were honor God through the fact that by their very nature they are indicative of the power and wisdom of Him who brought them into existence. For this induces him who considers them to honor God, either by means of articulate utterance or without it if speech is not permitted him. The Hebrew language gives itself latitude in that it applies to this notion the *term saying*. Accordingly it is said of that which is devoid of apprehension that it praises God. Thus Scripture says: *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee;*[18] whereby it conveys that the bones necessitate this belief, as though they put it into speech, for they too make this known. It is in view of this notion being named *glory* that it is said, *The whole earth is full of His glory*,[19] this being equivalent to the dictum, *And the earth is full of His praise*,[20] for praise is called *glory*. Thus it is said: *Give glory to the Lord your God;*[21] and it is said: *And in His temple all say: Glory.*[22] This occurs frequently. Understand then likewise the equivocality with reference to *glory* and interpret the latter in every passage in accordance with the context. You shall thus be saved from great difficulty.

16. In the preceding chapter.
17. The word *taʿẓīm*, translated by "honoring," and the word *iẓma*, translated by "greatness," derive from the same root.
18. Ps. 35:10. 19. Isa. 6:3. 20. Hab. 3:3. 21. Jer. 13:16. 22. Ps. 29:9.

CHAPTER 65

I do not consider that – after having attained this degree and having gained the true knowledge that He, may He be exalted, exists not by virtue of an existence and is one not by virtue of a oneness – you require that the denial of the attribute of speech with reference to Him be explained to you. This is the case particularly in view of the general consensus of our community on the *Torah* being created. This is meant to signify that His speech that is ascribed to Him is created. It was ascribed to Him only because the words heard by *Moses* were created and brought into being by God, just as He has created all the things that He has created and brought into being. Later prophecy will be treated of at length. | The intention here is to indicate that predicating speech of Him is similar to predicating of Him all the actions resembling ours. Thus the minds of people are rightly guided toward the view that there is a divine science apprehended by the prophets in consequence of God's speaking to them and telling it to them so that we should know that the notions transmitted by them from God to us are not, as shall be made clear, mere products of their thought and insight. But this subject has already been mentioned by us.

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth that the words *speaking* and *saying* are equivocal, applied both to utterance by the tongue – as when it says, *Moses spoke;*[1] *And Pharaoh said*[2] – and to notions represented by the intellect without being uttered – as when it says, *Then said I in my heart;*[3] *Then I spoke in my heart;*[4] *And thy heart shall speak;*[5] *My heart said unto thee;*[6] *And Esau said in his heart.*[7] This meaning is frequent. The terms in question are also used to denote wishing, as in the verse, *He thought*[8] *to have slain David.*[9] It is as if it said he wished to slay him, that is, gave his mind to it. Thus: *Thinkest thou*[10] *to kill me;*[11] the interpretation and meaning of it are: do you want to kill me? And also in the verse: *But all the congregation wanted*[12] *to stone them with stones.*[13] This meaning likewise is frequent.

Now in all cases in which the words *saying* and *speaking* are applied to God, they are used in one of the two latter meanings. I mean to say that they are used to denote either will and volition or a notion that has been grasped by the understanding having come from God, in which case it is

1. Exod. 19:19. 2. Exod. 5:5. 3. Eccles. 2:15. 4. Eccles. 2:15.
5. Prov. 23:33. 6. Ps. 27:8. 7. Gen. 27:41. 8. Literally: *said.*
9. II Sam. 21:16. 10. Literally: *sayest thou.* 11. Exod. 2:14.
12. Literally: *said.* 13. Num. 14:10.

indifferent whether it has become known by means of a created voice or through one of the ways of prophecy, which we shall make clear. The terms in question never signify that He, may He be exalted, spoke using the sounds of letters and a voice, nor that He, may He be exalted, possesses a soul into which notions are impressed so that there would subsist in His essence a notion superadded to that essence. For these notions are attached to and related to Him in the same way as all other actions. As regards volition and will being denoted by the words *saying* and *speaking* | —this, as we have made clear, is one of the meanings because of which these words are equivocal. In this case too they are used by way of likening Him to us. For as we have pointed out above,[14] man cannot understand at first how, where there is a will that a thing should be done, that thing should be done by the mere will alone. In fact, if one thinks of it in a superficial way,[15] there is no doubt that he who wills either does the thing the existence of which he wills, or commands somebody else to do it. For this reason the term "command" is figuratively used of God with reference to the coming to be of that which He has willed. Thus it is said that He commanded that this should come to be. The words are used accordingly by way of likening His actions to ours, in addition to their being used, as we have made clear, to indicate the meaning: he wished. In all cases in which *He said, He said,* occurs in the *Account of the Beginning*,[16] it means He willed or wanted. This has already been said by an individual[17] other than we and is very well known. The demonstration of this, I mean that His *sayings* [at the creation of the world] were volitions only and not speeches, lies in the fact that speech may only be addressed to an existent that receives the command in question. Thus the dictum of Scripture, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made*,[18] is analogous to its dictum, *And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth*, in the same verse. For the terms *His word* and *His saying* are used figuratively in the same way as the terms *His mouth* and *the breath of His mouth*, the intention being to signify that the heavens have come to exist through His purpose and will. No one among our renowned men of knowledge is ignorant of this. I do not need to make clear that the words *saying* and *speaking* have an identical meaning

14. Cf. I 46.
15. The Arabic expression, *fī bādiʾ al-raʾy*, is frequently used by the philosophers. Literally it means "in the beginning of opinion."
16. *maʿaseh bereshith*. As Maimonides states in his Introduction, this expression may mean "physics."
17. Or: individuals. 18. Ps. 33:6.

in the Hebrew language, as is shown by the verse: *For it hath heard all the sayings of the Lord which He spoke.*[19]

CHAPTER 66

And the tables were the work of God.[1] He intends to signify by this that this existence was natural | and not artificial, for all natural things are called *the work of the Lord: These saw the works of the Lord.*[2] Accordingly after he has mentioned all natural things, such as plants, animals, winds, rains, and others of the same kind, he says: *How manifold are Thy works, O Lord!*[3] He went even further than this ascription in saying: *The cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted.*[4] It is because the existence of the cedars is natural and not artificial that he says that God has planted them. Similarly when it says[5] *the writing of God,*[6] it has already made clear in what way the writing may be ascribed to God by its saying[7] *written with the finger of God.*[8] Its saying *with the finger of God* is analogous to its saying, with reference to the heavens, *the work of Thy fingers.*[9] For Scripture has made clear with regard to the heavens that they have been made by *saying: By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*[10] It has then become clear to you that, with regard to the coming into being of a thing, the texts figuratively use the *terms saying* and *speaking* and that it is one and the same thing of which it is said that it was *made by speech* and of which it is said that it is the *work of a finger.* Similarly the dictum *written with the finger of God* is equivalent to its saying *by the word of God.* Furthermore, the expression *by the word of God* would, if Scripture had used it, be equivalent to its saying *written by the will of God,* I mean by His will and volition.[11] As for *Onqelos,* with reference to this matter he puts forward a strange interpretation, for he translates: *written with a finger belonging to the Lord.* For he makes out that *finger* is a certain thing related to God and interprets the *finger of the Lord* in an analogous way to

19. Josh. 24:27.
1. Exod. 32:16. 2. Ps. 107:24. 3. Ps. 104:24. 4. Ps. 104:16.
5. With reference to the Tables of the Law. 6. Exod. 32:16.
7. With reference to the Tables of the Law. 8. Exod. 31:18.
9. Ps. 8:4. 10. Ps. 33:6.
11. This clause is intended to explain the Hebrew word for "will," which Maimonides has just used.

the mountain of the Lord, the rod of the Lord. He intends to signify by this that the finger is a created instrument that has cut into the tables through the will of God. I do not know what has led him to make this interpretation. For it would have been more plausible to translate *written by the word of the Lord,* just as the Scripture says: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.* Do you think that the existence of writing on the tables is any stranger than the existence of stars in the spheres? For just as the stars came into being through the First Will and not through an instrument, so this inscribed writing came into being through the First Will and not through an instrument. You already know | the text of the *Mishnah*[12] about *ten things created in the twilight,*[13] among which were *the writing and the inscription.* This proves that there was a general consensus among the multitude that the *writing on the tables* was like all the other *work in the beginning,* as we have made clear in the Commentary on the *Mishnah.*

CHAPTER 67

As the term *to say* [*'amirah*] is figuratively used for the will in regard to everything that has been created in the *six days of the beginning*—with reference to which it is said: *He said, He said*—the term *to rest* [*shebithah*] is derivatively used with reference to the Sabbath as there was no creation on that day. It is accordingly said: *And He rested on the seventh day.*[1] For refraining from speech is likewise called *rest.* Thus it is said: *So these three men ceased*[2] *to answer Job.*[3] Similarly the *term to repose* [*niḥah*] occurs in the sense of refraining from speech. Thus it says: *They spoke to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David and reposed*[4] [*yanuḥu*]; the meaning of which in my opinion is: "and then refrained from speech until they heard the answer." For in the preceding verses there is no mention of their being tired in any way, so that even if they were tired, the term *reposed* would be quite extraneous to the story. Scripture merely relates that they brought out that speech with its effort at graciousness and then were silent; that is, they did not add any other uttered notion to that speech, or any act, that would necessitate his reply to them to be such as

12. Mishnah, Aboth, V 6.
13. Of the sixth day of the days in which the world was created.
1. Gen. 2:2. 2. Literally: *rested.* 3. Job. 32:1. 4. I Sam. 25:9.

he gave. For the purpose of the story is to give an account of [Nabal's] blameworthiness and to make clear that it was extreme.

In this sense it is likewise said: *And He reposed* [*va-yanaḥ*] *the seventh day*.[5] However, the *Sages* and the other commentators have made | out that the signification of the verb derives from that of rest and that it is a transitive verb. Accordingly the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, have said: *He let His world repose on the seventh day*,[6] meaning that creation ceased on that day. It is also possible that [the verb va-yanaḥ, meaning He reposed] is one of those verbs the first or the third radicals of which are weak. If this were so, it would mean: He established existence, or He made the latter endure as it was on the seventh day. Thus Scripture would say that on every day of the preceding six, events occurred that did not correspond to the established nature that exists at present in the whole of existence, whereas on the seventh day the state of things became lasting and established just as it is at present. This assertion made by us is not refuted by observation that the conjugation of the verb in question is not like that of the verbs the first or third radicals of which are weak. For sometimes conjugations are irregular and may be found not to correspond to other analogous examples. This occurs more particularly in the case of these weak verbs. The doing-away with the notion in question, which gives rise to vain imagining, should not be negated because of the rules of conjugation obtaining in the [Hebrew] language, for we know that today we have no complete understanding of the science of our language and that in all languages rules merely conform to the majority of cases. On the other hand, we find in the case of this root that that verb too whose second radical is weak has sometimes the meaning: to set, to establish. Thus the dictum: *And she shall be set* [*va-huniḥah*] *there*.[7] And similarly: *And she suffered neither the birds of the air to be established*[8] *on them*[9]. In my opinion the verb has this meaning also in the verse: *That I might be established*[10] *in the day of trouble*.[11] As for the verb *vayyinaphash*,[12] it is a passive form deriving from the word *nephesh* [*soul*]. Now we have already made clear[13] the equivocality of the term *soul* and have explained that it may have the meaning of purpose and volition. Accordingly it means that His purpose was perfected and all His will realized.

5. Exod. 20:11. 6. Genesis Rabbah, X *in fine*. 7. Zech. 5:11.
8. Literally: *rest* (*la-nuaḥ*). 9. II Sam. 21:10. 10. Literally: *rest*. 11. Hab. 3:16.
12. Generally translated "to rest." The verb figures in the following verse: *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested* (Exod. 31:17).
13. Cf. I 41.

CHAPTER 68

You already know that the following dictum | of the philosophers with reference to God, may He be exalted, is generally admitted: the dictum being that He is the intellect as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object, and that those three notions form in Him, may He be exalted, one single notion in which there is no multiplicity.[1] We have mentioned this likewise in our great compilation,[2] since this, as we have made clear there, is one of the foundations of our Law; I mean the fact that He is one only and that no other thing can be added to Him, I mean to say that there is no eternal thing other than He. For this reason it is said, *by the Lord the living*, and not, *by the life of the Lord*. For His life is not something other than His essence, as we have made clear when speaking of the negation of attributes. However, there is no doubt that anyone who has not studied the books that have been composed concerning the intellect has not grasped the essence of the intellect, has not acquired knowledge of its quiddity, and has no understanding of it other than one that resembles his understanding of the notions of blackness and whiteness, has great difficulty in understanding this notion. In fact our saying that He is the intellectual cognition[3] as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object will appear to him as if we had said that whiteness, that which has become white, and that which whitens, are one and the same thing. How many ignoramuses there are who hasten to refute us by means of this and similar examples, and how many pretending to knowledge there are who have great difficulties with regard to this and who hold that the minds cannot attain the knowledge that it is correct that this matter should be necessarily true. Yet this notion is a matter of demonstration and is quite clear, as the theologizing[4] philosophers have explained. Here I shall make clear to you that which they have demonstrated.

Know that before a man intellectually cognizes a thing, he is potentially the intellectually cognizing subject. Now if he has intellectually cognized a thing (it is as if you said that if a man has intellectually cognized this piece

1. On this dictum, cf. Translator's Introduction.
2. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Yesodei ha-Torah, I.
3. *ʿaql*. The term also means "intellect."
4. *al-mutaʾallihūn*. This participle sometimes refers to those who become divine (for instance by union with, or imitation of, God). In this context, however, Maimonides seems to have in mind the philosophers interested in the divine science.

of wood to which one can point, has stripped its form from its matter, and has represented to himself the pure form—this being the action of the intellect), at that time the man would become one who has intellectual cognition in actu. Intellect realized in actu is the pure abstract form, | which is in his mind, of the piece of wood. For intellect is nothing but the thing that is intellectually cognized. Accordingly it has become clear to you that the thing that is intellectually cognized is the abstract form of the piece of wood, that this form is identical with the intellect realized in actu, and that these are not two things—intellect and the intellectually cognized form of the piece of wood. For the intellect in actu is nothing but that which has been intellectually cognized; and the thing by means of which the form of wood was intellectually cognized and made abstract, that thing being the intellectually cognizing subject, is also indubitably identical with the intellect realized in actu. For in the case of every intellect, its act is identical in essence; for intellect in actu is not one thing and its act another thing; for the true reality and the quiddity of the intellect[5] is apprehension. You should not then think that the intellect in actu is a certain thing existing by itself apart from apprehension and that apprehension is something else subsisting in that intellect. For the very being and true reality of the intellect is apprehension. Whenever, therefore, you assume that an intellect exists in actu, that intellect is identical with the apprehension of what has been intellectually cognized. This is most clear to whoever has attempted this kind of speculation. Accordingly it is clear that the act of the intellect, which is its apprehension, is the true reality and the essence of the intellect. Consequently the thing by means of which the form of that piece of wood was abstracted and apprehended, which thing is the intellect,[6] is also the intellectually cognizing subject. For it is that very intellect that abstracted the form and apprehended it, this being its act because of which it is said to be an intellectually cognizing subject. Now its act is identical with its essence. Accordingly that which has been assumed to be an intellect in actu has nothing belonging to it except the form of the piece of wood. Accordingly it is clear that whenever intellect exists in actu, it is identical with the intellectually cognized thing. And it has become clear that the act of every intellect, which act consists in its being intellectually cognizing, is identical with the essence of that intellect. Consequently the intellect,[7] the intellectually cognizing subject, and the intellectually cognized object

5. In this passage this translation seems to be more appropriate than "intellectual cognition." It is, however, impossible to separate the two senses.
6. Or: intellectual cognition. 7. Or: the intellectual cognition

are always one and the same thing in the case of everything that is cognized in actu. |

If, however, potential cognition is assumed, they – that is, the intellect in potentia and the potentially cognizable object – are necessarily two things. It is as if you said the hylic intellect subsisting in Zayd is a potential intellect, and similarly this piece of wood is in potentia an intellectually cognized object. Indubitably these are two things. When thereupon the intellect becomes actual and the form of the piece of wood is realized as intellectually cognized, then the intellectually cognized form is identical with the intellect – that very intellect, which is an intellect in actu, being the one by means of which the form was abstracted and intellectually cognized. For everything that has an existing act exists in actu. Thus every intellect in potentia and potentially cognizable objects are two things. Moreover, everything that is in potentia must undoubtedly have a substratum supporting this potentiality, such a substratum as, for instance, man. Thus there are three things: the man who supports that potentiality and who is the intellectually cognizing subject in potentia; the potentiality that is the intellect in potentia; and the thing apt to be intellectually cognized, which is the potentially cognizable object. In the example in question, this would be as if you said: man, hylic intellect, and the form of the piece of wood – these being three separate notions. When, however, the intellect is realized in actu, the three notions become one. Accordingly you will never find in that case that intellect is one thing and the intellectually cognized object another thing, unless they are regarded as being in potentia.

Now when it is demonstrated that God, may He be held precious and magnified, is an intellect in actu and that there is absolutely no potentiality in Him – as is clear and shall be demonstrated – so that He is not by way of sometimes apprehending and sometimes not apprehending[8] but is always an intellect in actu, it follows necessarily that He and the thing apprehended are one thing, which is His essence. Moreover, the act of apprehension owing to which He is said to be an intellectually cognizing subject is in itself the intellect, which is His essence. Accordingly He is always the intellect as well as the intellectually cognizing subject and the intellectually cognized object. It is accordingly also clear | that the numerical unity of the intellect, the intellectually cognizing subject, and the intellectually cognized object, does not hold good with reference to the Creator only, but also with reference to every intellect. Thus in us too, the intellectually cognizing

8. Cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics* xii.7.1072b14 ff.; *De Anima* iii.5.430a10 ff. Cf. Translator's Introduction.

subject, the intellect, and the intellectually cognized object, are one and the same thing wherever we have an intellect in actu. We, however, pass intellectually from potentiality to actuality only from time to time. And the separate intellect too, I mean the active intellect, sometimes gets an impediment that hinders its act—even if this impediment does not proceed from this intellect's essence, but is extraneous to it—being a certain motion happening to it by accident.

We do not intend at present to explain this, our intention being to affirm that that which pertains solely to Him, may He be exalted, and which is specific to Him is His being constantly an intellect in actu and that there is no impediment either proceeding from His essence or from another that might hinder His apprehending. Accordingly it follows necessarily because of this that He is always and constantly an intellectually cognizing subject, an intellect, and an intellectually cognized object. Thus His essence is the intellectually cognizing subject, the intellectually cognized object, and the intellect, as is also necessarily the case with regard to every intellect in actu. We have repeated this notion several times in this chapter because the minds of men are very much strangers to this way of representing the thing to oneself. I do not consider that you might confuse intellectual representation with imagination and with the reception of an image of a sense object by the imaginative faculty, as this Treatise has been composed only for the benefit of those who have philosophized and have acquired knowledge of what has become clear with reference to the soul and all its faculties.

CHAPTER 69

The philosophers, as you know, designate God, may He be exalted, as | the first cause and the first ground.[1] On the other hand, those who are generally known as Mutakallimūn avoid these designations very deliberately and designate Him as the maker[2] and think that there is a great difference between our saying cause and ground and our saying maker. For they say that if we say that He is a cause, the existence of that which is caused follows necessarily, and that this leads to the doctrine of the

1. The text has *al-ʿilla al-ūlā* and *al-sabab al-awwal*. In this context the expressions are synonymous, both of them meaning "the first cause."
2. The act of making (*fiʿl*) is the same as the "act" spoken of in the preceding chapter.

eternity of the world and of the world necessarily following from God. If, however, we say that He is the maker, it does not necessarily follow that that which is made exists together with Him. For the maker sometimes precedes the act of making. But they only consider a maker as preceding the act of making. Now this is the assertion of people who do not make a distinction between what is in potentia and what is in actu.

But you know that, regarding this subject, there is no difference between your saying a cause and your saying a maker. For if you regard the cause as being likewise in potentia, it precedes its effect in time. If, on the other hand, it is a cause in actu, its effect exists necessarily in virtue of the existence of the cause as a cause in actu. Similarly if you regard a maker as a maker in actu, the existence of that which is made by him follows necessarily. For before he builds a house, a builder is not a builder in actu, but a builder in potentia; just as the matter of a particular house, before it is built, is matter in a state of potentiality. However, when a builder builds, he is a builder in actu, and then the existence of a built thing follows necessarily. Thus we have gained nothing by preferring the term "maker" to the term "cause and ground." The whole purpose here is to show the equivalence of those two terms. For just as we designate Him as a maker — even if that which is made by Him be nonexistent — because there is no impediment hindering Him from accomplishing the act of making whenever He wills to, we are also permitted to designate Him in very | same sense as a cause and a ground — though that which is caused be nonexistent.

In fact the philosophers were induced to designate Him, may He be exalted, as a cause and not as a maker, not because of their generally known opinion with regard to the eternity of the world, but because of other notions of which I will give you a summary account. In natural science, it has been made clear that there are causes for everything that has a cause; that they are four: namely, matter, form, the efficient cause, and the end; and that some of them are proximate causes and others remote ones. Every cause belonging to one of these four is designated as cause and ground. Now one of the opinions of the philosophers, an opinion with which I do not disagree, is that God, may He be held precious and magnified, is the efficient cause, that He is the form, and that He is the end. Thus it is for this reason that they say that He, may He be exalted, is a cause and a ground, in order to comprise these three causes — that is, the fact that God is the efficient cause[3] of the world, its form, and its end.

3. *fāʿil*, the Arabic term translated here as "efficient cause," has been rendered above by the word "maker."

My purpose in this chapter is to make it clear to you in what respect it is said of Him, may He be exalted, that He is the efficient cause, that He is the form of the world, and that He is its end. You should not busy your mind at this place with the subject of the temporal creation of the world by Him or of its necessarily proceeding from Him, as is the opinion of the philosophers, for there will come subsequently a long discussion of that problem appropriate to the subject. The subject here, on the other hand, is God's being the efficient cause[4] of the partial actions occurring in the world, just as He is the efficient cause of the world as a whole.

I shall accordingly say: It has been made clear in natural science that for every one of the four kinds of causes one also needs to seek a cause. Accordingly, with reference to every generated thing, there are to be found four causes proximate to it, and there are to be found causes for these causes and causes for the causes of the latter until one arrives at the first causes. For instance this effected thing has a certain N as its efficient cause, | and this efficient cause in its turn has an efficient cause; and this continues until the first mover is attained, who is in true reality the efficient cause of all these intermediaries. For if the letter Alif is moved by the letter Bā, and the latter is moved by the letter Jīm, which is moved by the Dāl, moved in its turn by the letter Hā, this process cannot go on endlessly. Thus we have to stop for instance at the letter Hā. And there is accordingly no doubt that the letter Hā is the mover of Alif, of Bā, of Jīm, and of Dāl. And it is truly said with reference to the motion of Alif that it is due to an action of Hā. In this way every action that occurs in Being is referred to God, as we shall make clear, even if it is worked by one of the proximate efficient causes; God, considered as efficient cause, is then the remotest one.[5]

Similarly we find, when attentively investigating the natural forms subject to generation and corruption, that they are inevitably preceded by another form that gives that particular matter the disposition required for the reception of that particular form; that second form is in its turn preceded by another form until we finally come to the ultimate form that is necessary for the existence of the intermediate forms, while the latter are the cause of the proximate form. This ultimate form for all that exists[6] is God, may He be exalted. You should not think that our saying of Him that He is the ultimate form of the whole world refers to the ultimate form of which Aristotle says in the "Metaphysics" that it is not subject to generation and

4. *fāʿil*. Cf. preceding note. 5. Literally: the remotest cause.
6. Literally: in all existence.

corruption; the form mentioned there is a natural one and is not a separate intellect. For our saying of Him, may He be exalted, that He is the ultimate form of the world does not denote that there is an analogy between Him and the form endowed with matter in its being a form to that particular matter,[7] so that | He, may He be exalted, would be a form to a body. It was not said with reference to this point of view. One should rather consider that just as every existent thing endowed with a form is what it is in virtue of its form — in fact its being passes away and is abolished when its form passes away — there subsists the very same relation between the deity and the totality of the remote principles of existence. For the universe[8] exists in virtue of the existence of the Creator, and the latter continually endows it with permanence in virtue of the thing that is spoken of as overflow — as we shall make clear in one[9] of the chapters of this Treatise.[10] Accordingly if the nonexistence of the Creator were supposed, all that exists would likewise be nonexistent; and the essence of its remote causes, of its ultimate effects, and of that which is between these, would be abolished. God has therefore, with reference to the world, the status of a form with regard to a thing possessing a form, in virtue of which it is that which it is: a thing the true reality and essence of which are established by that form. Such is the relation of the deity to the world. In this respect it is said of Him that He is the ultimate form and the form of forms; that is, He is that upon which the existence and stability of every form in the world ultimately reposes and by which they are constituted, just as the things endowed with forms are constituted by their forms. Because of this notion, God is called in our language the *Living of the worlds*, meaning that He is the life of the world, as shall be made clear.[11]

Matters are similar with regard to every end, for when a thing has an end you should seek the end of that end. You say, as it were, for instance that a throne has wood as its matter, a carpenter as its efficient cause, squareness of a particular shape as its form, and to be sat upon as its end. You should consequently ask: what is the end of sitting upon the throne? Thereupon it will be said that it consists in the lifting up, and the being elevated above the earth, of the sitter upon the chair. Thereupon you will ask again, saying: what is the end of being lifted up above | the earth? Thereupon you will receive the answer that it consists in the magnification

7. Literally: Our saying that He is the ultimate form of the world is not in the image of the being of the form endowed with matter as a form to that matter.
8. *al-kull* (the all). The word has a less definite connotation than "universe."
9. The word *baʿḍ* may also mean "several."
10. Cf. II 12. 11. Cf. I 72.

of the sitter in the eyes of those who see him. Thereupon you will ask: what is the end of his being great in the opinion of those who see him? Thereupon you will receive the answer that it consists in his being feared and regarded with awe. Thereupon you will ask, saying: what is the end of his being feared? Thereupon you will receive the answer that it consists in his orders being obeyed. Thereupon you will demand: what is the end of his orders being obeyed? Thereupon you will receive the answer that it consists in the prevention of harm being done by some people to others. Thereupon you will further demand to know the end of this. Thereupon you will receive the answer that it consists in the permanence of their existence in an orderly fashion. This should be done with regard to every end occurring in time until one finally arrives at His mere will,[12] may He be exalted—according to a certain opinion, as shall be made clear so that ultimately the answer will be: God willed it so; or—according to the opinion of others, as I shall make clear—one finally arrives at the decision of His wisdom so that ultimately the answer will be: His wisdom decided it so. Thus according to these two opinions the order of all ends is ultimately due to His will and wisdom, as to which it has been made clear, according to our opinion, that they are identical with His essence: His will and His volition or His wisdom not being things extraneous to His essence. I mean to say that they are not something other than His essence. Consequently He, may He be exalted, is the ultimate end of everything; and the end of the universe[13] is similarly a seeking to be like unto His perfection as far as is in its capacity. This, as shall be made clear,[14] is the meaning of His will, which is His essence. In virtue of this it is said of Him that He is the end of the ends. Thus I have made clear to you in what respect it is said of Him, may He be exalted, that He is an efficient cause, a form, and an end. For this reason the philosophers designated Him as a cause and not only as a maker.[15]

Know, however, that in some people[16] from among the Mutakallimūn engaged in speculation, ignorance and presumption reached such a degree that finally they[17] said that if the nonexistence of the Creator were assumed, the nonexistence of the thing that the Creator has brought into existence—they mean[18] the world—would not follow necessarily. For it does not necessarily follow that | that which has been effected passes away when the

12. Literally: until the matter finally attains His mere will.
13. Literally: the all. Cf. n. 8, this chap. 14. Cf. III 13.
15. The word also means "efficient cause." Cf. n. 3, this chap.
16. Or: in one individual. 17. Or: he. 18. Or: he means.

maker[19] has passed away after having effected[20] it. Now that which they have mentioned would be correct if He were only the maker[21] and if the thing that He effected had no need of Him for its permanence to be lasting, as in the case of the carpenter upon whose death the chest does not pass away for he does not continually endow it with permanence. Now as He, may He be exalted, is also the form of the world, as we have made clear, and as He continually endows the latter with permanence and constant existence, it would be impossible that He who continually endows with permanence should disappear and that which is continually endowed by Him and which has no permanence except in virtue of this endowment should remain. This is the measure of the vain imagining necessitated by the opinion that He is only a maker[22] and not an end or a form.

CHAPTER 70

To *ride* [*rakhob*]. This word is equivocal. The first instance in which it is used means man's riding in the usual manner on beasts: *He was riding upon his she-ass.*[1] Afterwards it is used figuratively to designate domination over a thing, for a rider dominates over and rules that which he rides. Thus the dictum: *He made him ride on the heights of the earth;*[2] *I will make thee to ride upon the heights of the earth*[3] – meaning that you shall dominate the heights of the earth; *I will make Ephraim ride*[4] – that is I shall make him dominate and rule. In this sense it is said of God, may He be exalted: *The rider of the heavens is helping you;*[5] the interpretation of which is: He who dominates the heavens. Similarly: *The rider in the araboth;*[6] meaning: He who dominates the highest heaven encompassing the universe.[7]

The textual words of the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* which are repeated in every relevant passage,[8] assert that there are *seven heavens* and that *araboth* is | the highest encompassing the universe. Do not think it blameworthy that according to their reckoning there were *seven heavens,*

19. Or: the efficient cause. 20. Or: made. 21. Or: the efficient cause.
22. Or: an efficient cause.
1. Num. 22:22. 2. Deut. 32:13. 3. Isa. 58:14. 4. Hos. 10:11.
5. Deut. 33:26. 6. Ps. 68:5. The usual meaning of *ʿaraboth* is "desert," "plains."
7. Literally: the all. 8. Cf. B.T., Ḥagigah, 12b.

whereas there are more than that. For sometimes, as is clear to those engaged in speculation on this subject and as I shall make clear further on,[9] a sphere is counted as one though there be several heavens contained in it. What is intended here is to call attention to the fact that they constantly indicate that *araboth* is the highest part of the universe. It is with reference to *araboth* that it says: *The rider of the heavens* [*shamayim*] *is helping you.* Compare the text of *Ḥagigah*;[10] they say: [*As to*] *araboth, the high and sublime One resides upon it. For it is said: Extol the rider in the araboth. How do we know that* [*araboth*] *are also called heavens* [*shamayim*]? [*Because*] *it is written in this passage: the rider in the araboth, while in another* [*passage*] *it is written: the rider of the heavens.* Thus it is clear that the term refers solely to one heaven: that which encompasses the universe. About that heaven you will hear some information. Consider their saying: *resides upon it.* They did not say: *resides in it.* For if they had said, *resides in it*, this expression would have necessitated the attribution to Him of a place or the notion that He is a force subsisting in a certain place. In such fashion do the sects of the Sabians imagine that God is the spirit of heaven.[11] Thus by saying, *resides upon it*, they have shown that He, may He be exalted, is separate from the heaven and is not a force in it. Know that the expression, *the rider of the heavens*, is figuratively used of Him, may He be exalted, for the sake of a strange and wondrous likeness. For the rider is more excellent than that upon which he rides, yet cannot be called more excellent except through a certain impropriety of language, for the rider does not belong to the same species as that which is ridden by him. Moreover the rider is he who makes the beast of burden move and go where he wishes; for it is an instrument for him that he uses as he wishes, being at the same time free from any dependence on it and not attached to it, but on the contrary external to it. Similarly the deity, may His name be held sublime, is the mover of the highest heaven, by whose motion everything that is in motion within this heaven[12] is moved; at the same time, He, may He be exalted, is separate from this heaven and not a force subsisting within it. Accordingly the Sages interpreting | His speech, may He be exalted, *The eternal God is a dwelling place*,[13] say in *Bereshith Rabbah*:[14]

9. Cf. II 4. 10. B.T., Ḥagigah, 12b.
11. *al-falak* (the heavenly sphere). Because of Maimonides' use of *kurra*, which means "sphere" as well, *falak* is translated in this chapter by "heaven." But the translation "heavenly sphere" used elsewhere is perhaps more appropriate.
12. All the universe encompassed by the highest heaven may be considered as being within this sphere.
13. Deut. 33:27. 14. Genesis Rabbah, LXVIII.

He is *the dwelling place of His world, [whereas] His world is not His dwelling place.* And they follow this by saying: *The horse is subsidiary to the rider, [whereas] the rider is not subsidiary to the horse. In this sense it is written: That Thou dost ride upon Thy horses.*[15] This is literally what they say. Consider it, and it shall become clear to you how they explained His relation, may He be exalted, to heaven: that it is His instrument by means of which He governs that which is existent. For whenever you find that according to the *Sages, may their memory be blessed,* there exists one thing in one particular heaven[16] and another thing in another, the meaning of the passage is not that in that particular heaven there are to be found bodies other than that heaven, but that the forces generating the particular thing in question and safeguarding its order come from that heaven. A proof of what I have said to you is their saying: *Araboth—that in which [exist] righteousness, right-dealing, justice, the treasures of life, the treasures of peace, the treasures of blessing, the soul of the righteous ones, the souls and the spirits that shall be created in the future, and the dew by means of which the Holy One, blessed be He, will revive the dead.*[17] Now it is clear that not one of all the things that they have enumerated here is a body and therefore to be located in a place. For the *dew* is not the dew denoted by the word in its external meaning. Consider that they said in this passage: *that in which*—I mean to say that the things mentioned are in *araboth*—and they did not say that the things are upon it. Thus they have, as it were, given the information that these things existent in the world only exist because they proceed from forces coming from the *araboth* of God, may He be exalted, who caused [the araboth] to be their first origin and who situated them in it. To these things belong *the treasures of life.* In fact it is correct and the absolute truth to say that every life existing in a living being only proceeds from that life,[18] as I shall subsequently[19] mention.

Reflect also that they enumerated in the list *the soul of the righteous ones, and the souls and the spirits that shall be created in the future.* How sublime | is this notion to him who has understood it! For the *souls* that remain after death are not the *soul* that comes into being in man at the time he is generated. For that which comes into being at the time a man is

15. Hab. 3:8.
16. In this context *samāʾ* seems to be a synonym of *falak*, translated in this chapter by "heaven." Cf. n. 11, this chap. Maimonides probably uses the word *samāʾ* in this passage because of its kinship with the Hebrew word *shamayim*, employed in the texts to which he alludes.
17. B.T., Ḥagigah, 12b.
18. The life to which the expression *treasures of life* alludes.
19. Cf. I 72, II 10.

generated[20] is merely a faculty consisting in preparedness, whereas the thing that after death is separate from matter is the thing that has become actual and not the *soul* that also comes into being; the latter is identical with the spirit that comes into being. Because of this the Sages have numbered the *souls and spirits* among the things that come into being. What is separate is, on the contrary, one thing only. We have already made clear the equivocality of the term *spirit*.[21] We have likewise made clear, in the last portion of the *Book of Knowledge*,[22] the equivocality regarding these terms.

Consider accordingly that these strange but correct notions attained by the speculation of the most sublime of those who have philosophized are found scattered in the *Midrashim*. When a man who has knowledge, but is not equitable, studies these texts, he laughs at them at the beginning of his study because he sees that their external meanings diverge so widely from the true realities of existence. The cause of all of this is, as we have told several times, the enigmatic presentation of these things, which is due to the fact that they are too strange to be understood by the vulgar.

I shall return to the remainder of what I have started out to explain. I shall then say that [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, tried by means of the texts of the scriptural verses to furnish proof that the things enumerated by them were found in *araboth*, saying: [*As for*] *righteousness and justice, as it is written: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne*.[23] They similarly furnished proof that those things, which they enumerated as standing in relation to God, may He be exalted, are with Him. Understand this. They said in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*:[24] *The Holy One, blessed be He, has created seven firmaments; and of all them, He chose as throne of glory for His kingship only araboth. For it is said: Extol the rider in the araboth*.[25] This is literally what he says. Understand it likewise. Know that a set of beasts that are ridden upon is called *chariot*.[26] This occurs in frequent | repetition: *And Joseph made ready his chariot;*[27] *in the second chariot;*[28] *Pharaoh's chariots*.[29] A proof that this term is applied to a number of beasts is found in the dictum: *And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty*.[30] This is a proof that the term *chariot* is applied to four

20. The words translated in this passage by "come into being" and "be generated" are two different forms of the same Arabic verb.
21. Cf. I 40.
22. A section of the *Mishneh Torah*. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Yesodei ha-Torah, IV.
23. Ps. 89:15. 24. Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, XVIII. 25. Ps. 68:5.
26. This is the usual meaning of the Hebrew word *merkabah* cited by Maimonides.
27. Gen. 46:29. 28. Gen. 41:43. 29. Exod. 15:4. 30. I Kings 10:29.

horses. With regard to this I say that since it is said, in accordance with what is said in Scripture, that *the throne of glory* was borne by *four animals*, the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, called it a *chariot*; they thus likened it to a *chariot* that is made up of four individuals.[31] This is the limit to which the speech advances in this chapter. There is no doubt that there are many other intimations with reference to this subject. However, the purpose of this chapter, toward which the argument was repeatedly brought back, is that the dictum, *The rider of the heavens*,[32] signifies: He who makes the encompassing heaven revolve and who moves it in virtue of His power and His will. A similar interpretation should be given to the rest of the *verse: and in His excellency*[33] *on the skies*, meaning that *in virtue of His excellency* He makes the *skies* revolve—bringing out the first of them, which is *araboth*, as we made clear in our discussion of the word *riding* and explained the remainder of it in our discussion of the word *excellency*. For all the heavens move as parts in virtue of the movement of the highest heaven, that is, the diurnal movement. And this great power of His is that which moves the whole. Because of this Scripture calls it: *excellency*. This notion should always be present in your mind with regard to new matters about which I shall speak. For it is the greatest proof through which one can know the existence of the deity—I mean the revolution of the heaven—as I shall demonstrate. Understand this. |

CHAPTER 71

Know that the many sciences devoted to establishing the truth regarding these matters that have existed in our religious community have perished because of the length of the time that has passed, because of our being dominated by the pagan nations, and because, as we have made clear,[1] it is not permitted to divulge these matters to all people. For the only thing it is permitted to divulge to all people are the texts of the books. You already know that even the legalistic science of law was not put down in writing in the olden times because of the precept,[2] which is widely

31. I.e., four horses. 32. Deut. 33:26.
33. The usual meaning of the Hebrew word is "pride."
1. Cf. I 34.
2. Literally: matter, thing. This translation seems to be more in harmony with Maimonides' use of the Arabic word than the meaning "command," which is also denoted by *amr*.

known in the nation: *Words that I have communicated to you orally, you are not allowed to put down in writing.*[3] This precept shows extreme wisdom with regard to[4] the Law. For it was meant to prevent what has ultimately come about in this respect: I mean the multiplicity of opinions, the variety of schools, the confusions occurring in the expression of what is put down in writing, the negligence that accompanies what is written down, the divisions of the people, who are separated into sects, and the production of confusion with regard to actions. All these matters should be within the authority of *the Great Court of Law*, as we have made clear in our juridical compilations[5] and as the text of the *Torah* shows.[6] Now if there was insistence that the legalistic science of law should not, in view of the harm that would be caused by such a procedure, be perpetuated in a written compilation accessible to all the people, all the more could none of the *mysteries of the Torah* have been set down in writing and be made accessible to the people. On the contrary they were transmitted by a few men belonging to the elite to a few of the same kind, just as I made clear to you[7] from their saying: *The mysteries of the Torah may only be transmitted to a counsellor, wise in crafts, and so on.*[8] This was the cause that necessitated the disappearance | of these great roots of knowledge from the nation. For you will not find with regard to them anything except slight indications and pointers occurring in the *Talmud* and the *Midrashim*. These are, as it were, a few grains belonging to the core, which are overlaid by many layers of rind, so that people were occupied with these layers of rind and thought that beneath them there was no core whatever.

As for that scanty bit of argument[9] regarding the notion of the unity of God and regarding what depends on this notion, which you will find in the writings of some *Gaonim* and in those of the Qaraites, it should be noted that the subject matter of this argument was taken over by them from the Mutakallimūn of Islam and that this bit is very scanty indeed if compared to what Islam has compiled on this subject. Also it has so happened that Islam first began to take this road owing to a certain sect, namely, the Muʿtazila,[10] from whom our coreligionists[11] took over certain things

3. B.T., Gittin, 60b. 4. Or: on the part of.
5. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Introduction. 6. Cf. Deut. 17:8–12.
7. Cf. I 34. 8. B.T., Ḥagigah, 14a.
9. Or: of kalām. The word "argument" is used here to translate *kalām*.
10. A Moslem sect whose beginnings go back to the eighth century. The earliest comprehensive and rationalized system of Moslem theology was worked out by the Muʿtazilites.
11. Literally: companions.

walking upon the road the Muᶜtazila had taken. After a certain time another sect arose in Islam, namely, the Ashᶜariyya,[12] among whom other opinions arose. You will not find any of these latter opinions among our coreligionists. This was not because they preferred the first opinion[13] to the second, but because it so happened that they had taken over and adopted the first opinion and considered it a matter proven by demonstration.

As for the Andalusians[14] among the people of our nation, all of them cling to the affirmations of the philosophers and incline to their opinions, in so far as these do not ruin the foundation of the Law. You will not find them in any way taking the paths of the Mutakallimūn. In many things concerning the scanty matter of which the later ones among them had knowledge,[15] they have therefore approximately the same doctrine that we set forth in this Treatise.

Know also that all the statements that the men of Islam – both the Muᶜtazila and the Ashᶜariyya – have made concerning these notions are all of them opinions | founded upon premises that are taken over from the books of the Greeks and the Syrians who wished to disagree with the opinions of the philosophers and to reject their statements. The reason for this was that: inasmuch as the Christian community came to include those communities,[16] the Christian preaching being what it is known to be, and inasmuch as the opinions of the philosophers were widely accepted in those communities in which philosophy had first risen, and inasmuch as kings rose who protected religion – the learned of those periods from among the Greeks and the Syrians saw that those preachings are greatly and clearly opposed to the philosophic opinions. Thus there arose among them this science of kalām. They started to establish premises that would be useful to them with regard to their belief and to refute those opinions that ruined the foundations of their Law. When thereupon the community of Islam arrived and the books of the philosophers were transmitted to it, then were also transmitted to it those refutations composed against the books of the philosophers. Thus they found the kalām[17] of John Philoponus,[18] of Ibn

12. The disciples of Abu'l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī al-Ashᶜarī (d. 940) who propounded the principles of the doctrine that by and large was adopted as the official theology of Sunnite Islam.
13. That of the Muᶜtazila. 14. Or: the Spaniards.
15. Literally: the scanty matters found among the later ones of them. This apparently refers to the passages of the Talmud and the Midrashim that, as Maimonides states in the beginning of this chapter, belong to the old esoteric tradition.
16. I.e., the Greeks and the Syrians. 17. Or: the argumentation.
18. In Arabic, Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī; i.e., John the Grammarian, a translation of a Greek cognomen of this philosopher.

ᶜAdī,[19] and of others with regard to these notions, held on to it, and were victorious in their own opinion in a great task that they sought to accomplish. They also selected from among the opinions of the earlier philosophers everything that the one who selected considered useful for him, even if the later philosophers had already demonstrated the falseness of these opinions — as for instance that affirming the existence of atoms and the vacuum. And they considered that these were conceptions common to all and premises that everyone who accepts a Law is obliged to admit. Afterwards the kalām became wider in scope, and these people descended to other strange roads that had never been taken by the Mutakallimūn from among the Greeks and others, for these were near to the philosophers. Then there arose in Islam assertions of the Law that were particular to the members of that community and that | they necessarily had need to defend. Furthermore, differences of opinion between them with regard to these questions made their appearance, so that every sect among them established premises useful to it in the defense of its opinions. There is no doubt that there are things that are common to all three of us, I mean the Jews, the Christians, and the Moslems: namely, the affirmation of the temporal creation of the world, the validity of which entails the validity of miracles and other things of that kind. As for the other matters that these two communities took the trouble to treat and were engrossed in — for instance, the study of the notion of trinity into which the Christians plunged and the study of the kalām into which certain sects of the Moslems plunged — so that they found it requisite to establish premises and to establish, by means of these premises that they had chosen, the conceptions into the study of which they had plunged and the notions that are peculiar to each of the two communities, having been established in it: these are things that we do not require in any respect whatever.

To sum up: all the first Mutakallimūn from among the Greeks who had adopted Christianity and from among the Moslems did not conform in their premises to the appearance of that which exists, but considered how being ought to be in order that it should furnish a proof for the correctness of a particular opinion, or at least should not refute it. And when such a fantasy held good, they assumed that what exists corresponds to that form and started to argue in order to establish the truth of the assertions from which are taken the premises that show the correctness of their doctrine or that at least do not refute it. This is the way of the men of intellect who

19. This is an anachronism, for Yaḥya Ibn ᶜAdī — a Christian (monophysitic) theologian and an Aristotelian philosopher — died in 974, more than two centuries after the beginning of the Muᶜtazilite kalām. Cf. Translator's Introduction.

first used this method, put it down in books, and claimed that speculation alone impelled them to do so and that they did not seek thereby to protect a doctrine or a preconceived opinion. Men of later periods who study these books know nothing about all this and consequently find in | these ancient books a vigorous argumentation and a powerful endeavor to establish the truth of a certain thing or to refute a certain thing and think thereupon that its establishment or its refutation is in no way required for these foundations of the Law that are required. They believe accordingly that their predecessors did what they did only in order to confuse the opinions of the philosophers and to make them doubt of what they regarded as a demonstration. Those who say this are not aware, and do not know, that matters are not as they thought, but that their predecessors toiled to establish the truth of what they desired to establish as true and to refute what they desired to refute because of the harm that would come if this were not done – even if it were after a hundred propositions – to an opinion whose recognition as correct was desired by them. These ancient Mutakallimūn[20] did away with the disease starting with its root.

To sum up: I shall say to you that the matter is as Themistius puts it: that which exists does not conform to the various opinions, but rather the correct opinions conform to that which exists.

When I studied the books of these Mutakallimūn, as far as I had the opportunity – and I have likewise studied the books of the philosophers, as far as my capacity went – I found that the method of all of the Mutakallimūn was one and the same in kind, though the subdivisions differed from one another. For the foundation of everything is that no consideration is due to how that which exists is, for it is merely a custom; and from the point of view of the intellect, it could well be different. Furthermore, in many places they follow the imagination and call it intellect. Thus when they propound the premises that we will let you hear, they found by their demonstrations the [affirmative] judgment that the world is created in time. And when it is thus established that the world is created in time, it is likewise undoubtedly established that it has a maker | who has created it in time. Then they adduced arguments in favor of the inference that this maker is one; whereupon, basing themselves upon his being one, that he is not a body. This is the way of every Mutakallim from among the Moslems in anything concerning this subject. Thus also do those belonging to our community who imitate them and follow their ways. While the ways in which they adduce the arguments in favor of the inference as to, and

20. Literally: most ancient of the Mutakallimūn.

propound the premises with regard to, the establishment of the temporal creation of the world or to the refutation of its pre-eternity, differ from one another, the universal thesis of all of them consists in the first place in the affirmation of the temporal creation of the world. And by means of its temporal creation, it is established as true that the deity exists.

Now when I considered this method of thought, my soul felt a very strong aversion to it, and had every right to do so. For every argument deemed to be a demonstration of the temporal creation of the world is accompanied by doubts and is not a cogent demonstration except among those who do not know the difference between demonstration, dialectics, and sophistic argument. As for those who know these arts,[21] it is clear and evident to them that there are doubts with regard to all these proofs and that premises that have not been demonstrated have been used in them. The utmost power of one who adheres to a Law[22] and who has acquired knowledge of true reality consists, in my opinion, in his refuting the proofs of the philosophers bearing on the eternity of the world. How sublime a thing it is when the ability is there to do it! And everyone who engages in speculation, who is perceptive, and who has acquired true knowledge of reality and does not deceive himself, knows that with regard to this question — namely the eternity of the world or its temporal creation — no cogent demonstration can be reached and that it is a point before which the intellect stops. Later we shall speak about this at length. At present it will be enough for you to know with regard to this question that the philosophers of the various epochs disagree with respect to it for the last three thousand years up to this our time, as we can find in their works and the reports concerning them.

Now if this is the state of this question, how | can we take the doctrine of the temporal creation of the world as a premise upon which we found the existence of the deity? For in that case the existence of the deity would be doubtful. One would have to say that if the world were created in time, there would be a deity; and if it were eternal, there would be no deity in existence. Things either would be like that or we would claim that we have a demonstration of the creation of the world in time and we would use the sword[23] to prove it so that we should claim to know God by means of a demonstration. All this is remote from truth. For according to me the correct way, which is the method of demonstration about which there can be no doubt, is to establish the existence and the oneness of the deity and the

21. Apparently the arts of demonstration and argument.
22. Or: to the [Jewish] Law. 23. Literally: smite with the sword.

negation of corporeality through the methods of the philosophers, which methods are founded upon the doctrine of the eternity of the world. This is not because I believe in the eternity of the world or because I concede this point to the philosophers; but because it is through this method that the demonstration becomes valid and perfect certainty is obtained with regard to those three things: I mean the existence of the deity, His oneness, and His not being a body – and all this without making a judgment upon the world's being eternal or created in time. Thereupon, when these three great and sublime problems have been validated for us through a correct demonstration, we shall return to the question of the creation of the world in time and we shall enounce with regard to it all the argumentation that is possible.

If you are one of those who are persuaded by what the Mutakallimūn say, and if you believe that the demonstration with regard to the creation of the world in time is correct, bravo for you. If, however, it is not demonstrated in your opinion, and if you take over from the prophets, through obeying their authority, the doctrine that it was created in time, there is no harm in that. And you should not ask how prophecy can be true if the world is eternal, before you have heard our discourse concerning prophecy; however, at present we are not dealing with this notion. You ought to know that the premises that are established by those concerned with the roots, | I mean among the Mutakallimūn, with a view to affirming the creation of the world in time, imply – in a measure that you will hear defined – an *upsetting of the world* and a *change in the order established at the time of creation*. For I shall certainly set forth their premises and their way of drawing inferences.

As to this my method, it is as I shall describe to you in a general way now. Namely, I shall say: the world cannot but be either eternal or created in time. If it is created in time, it undoubtedly has a creator who created it in time. For it is a first intelligible that what has appeared at a certain moment in time has not created itself in time and that its creator is other than itself. Accordingly the creator who created the world in time is the deity. If, however, the world is eternal, it follows necessarily because of this and that proof that there is an existent other than all the bodies to be found in the world; an existent who is not a body and not a force in a body and who is one, permanent, and sempiternal; who has no cause and whose becoming subject to change is impossible. Accordingly he is a deity. Thus it has become manifest to you that the proofs for the existence and the oneness of the deity and of His not being a body ought to be procured from the

starting point afforded by the supposition of the eternity of the world, for in this way the demonstration will be perfect, both if the world is eternal and if it is created in time. For this reason you will always find that whenever, in what I have written in the books of jurisprudence, I happen to mention the foundations and start upon establishing the existence of the deity, I establish it by discourses that adopt the way of the doctrine of the eternity of the world. The reason is not that I believe in the eternity of the world, but that I wish to establish in our belief the existence of God, may He be exalted, through a demonstrative method as to which there is no disagreement in any respect. Thus we shall not cause the true opinion, which is of immense importance, to be supported by a foundation that everyone can shake and wish to destroy, while other men think that it has never been constructed. This method is particularly justified in view of the fact that these philosophic proofs concerning the three problems in question are derived | from the nature of existence that can be perceived and that is not denied except with a view to safeguarding certain opinions.

The proofs of the Mutakallimūn, on the other hand, are derived from premises that run counter to the nature of existence that is perceived so that they resort to the affirmation that nothing has a nature in any respect. In this Treatise, when speaking of the creation of the world in time, I shall devote for your benefit a chapter explaining to you some proof for the creation of the world in time. For I reach the goal that every Mutakallim desires, without abolishing the nature of existence and without disagreeing with Aristotle with regard to any point he has demonstrated. For whereas the proof, with the aid of which some Mutakallimūn prove by inference the creation of the world in time and which is their most powerful proof, is not consolidated for them until they abolish the nature of all existence and disagree with everything that the philosophers have made clear, I reach a similar proof without running counter to the nature of existence and without having recourse to violating that which is perceived by the senses. I saw fit to mention to you the general premises of the Mutakallimūn by means of which they establish the creation of the world in time, the existence of the deity, His oneness, and the rejection of His corporeality; and I shall show you their way in this and shall make clear to you what follows necessarily from each of those premises. After that I shall mention to you the proximate premises of the philosophers regarding this and I shall show you their way.

Do not, however, demand from me in this Treatise that I should establish the correctness of those philosophic premises that I shall formulate for your benefit. For doing this constitutes the greater part of the natural

and the divine science. Likewise you should not desire that I should let you hear in this Treatise the argumentation of the Mutakallimūn that is intended to establish the correctness of their premises. For | their lives passed away in this argumentation, and the lives of those who will come after them will likewise pass away in this, and their books have grown numerous. For every one of their premises, with few exceptions, is contradicted by what is perceived of the nature of that which exists, so that doubts come up with regard to them. Accordingly, the Mutakallimūn resort to compilations and disputations in order to establish this and that particular premise and to dispel the doubts coming with regard to it and to ward off that which is perceived and runs counter to the premise if there is no possibility of a stratagem with a view to getting around this. As for the philosophic premises that I shall formulate for your benefit with a view to a demonstration regarding the three problems in question – I mean the existence and oneness of the deity and the refutation of the doctrine of His corporeality – most of them are premises regarding which you achieve certainty as soon as you first hear them and understand their meaning. However, some of them refer you to the passages in which their demonstration occurs in the books concerning natural science or metaphysics. Accordingly you should have the intention of looking up the relevant passage and thus establishing the correctness of what may be required to have its correctness established.

I have already let you know that there exists nothing except God, may He be exalted, and this existent world and that there is no possible inference proving His existence, may He be exalted, except those deriving from this existent taken as a whole and from its details. Accordingly it necessarily behooves one to consider this existent as it is and to derive premises from what is perceived of its nature. For this reason it follows that you should know its perceptible form and nature, and then it will be possible to make an inference from it with regard to what is other than it. For this reason I judged that in the first place it behooves me to set down a chapter in which I would explain to you that which exists as a whole by informing you of what is demonstrated and is indubitably correct. After that I shall set down for your benefit other chapters in which I shall mention the premises of the Mutakallimūn and shall make clear their methods by means of which they elucidate the four problems in question. After that I shall set down for your benefit other chapters in which I shall make clear to you | the premises of the philosophers and their methods of inference with regard to these problems. After that I shall summarize for your benefit the method

that I shall adopt, as I have already informed you, with regard to these four problems.

CHAPTER 72

Know that this whole of being is one individual and nothing else. I mean to say that the sphere of the outermost heaven with everything that is within it is undoubtedly one individual having in respect of individuality the rank of Zayd and Umar. The differences between its substances, I mean the substances of this sphere with everything that is within it, are like unto the differences between the limbs of a man, for instance. Thus just as Zayd, for instance, is one individual and is at the same time composed of various parts of the body such as the flesh and the bones and of various mixtures and of several spirits,[1] the sphere in question as a whole is composed of the heavens, the four elements, and what is compounded of the latter. In that sphere there is absolutely no vacuum; it is solid and filled up. Its center is the sphere of the earth, while water encompasses the earth, air encompasses the water, fire encompasses the air, and the fifth body encompasses the fire. There are many spheres, one contained within the other, with no hollows between them and no vacuum in any way whatever. For they are perfectly spherical and cling to each other, all of them moving in a circular uniform motion in no part of which there is acceleration or deceleration. I mean to say that none of these spheres moves more quickly at some times and more slowly at others. On the contrary, every one of them follows its nature | in its velocity and the direction of its motion. However some of these spheres have a more rapid motion than others; the most rapid of all being the motion of the heaven encompassing the universe. This heaven is endowed with the diurnal motion and moves all the other heavens simultaneously with itself, as a part is moved in a whole, for all these heavens are parts of it.

These heavens have different centers. The center of some of them is identical with the center of the world, while the center of others is eccentric to the center of the world. Some of them move perpetually in a motion proper to them from the east to the west, while others move perpetually from the west to the east. Every star in these heavens is a part of the heavens

1. The animal spirits are meant.

in which it is fixed in its place and has no motion proper to it. It is seen as being in motion only because of the motion of the body of which it is a part. The matter of this fifth body as a whole, which is endowed with circular motion, is not like the matter of the bodies composed of the four elements that are contained within it.

It is not possible in any respect or in any fashion that the number of the spheres encompassing the world should be less than eighteen. It is, however, possible that their number should be greater than eighteen. This is a matter of speculation. It is also a matter of speculation whether there are epicycles, that is, spheres that do not encompass the world.[2]

In the interior of the nethermost sphere, which is near us, there is one kind of matter that differs from the matter of the fifth body and receives four primary forms. Through these four forms, earth, water, air, and fire come into being. Every one of these four elements has a natural place proper to it and is not found elsewhere if left to its nature. These four elements are inanimate bodies in which there is no life and no perception, | and they do not move of their own accord, but are at rest in their natural places. If, however, one of them is made by violence to leave its natural place, it moves, when the agent exerting violence has ceased to act, so as to return to its natural place. For there subsists in it a principle that makes it move in order to return to its place in a straight line. There is, however, no principle in it that would make it to be at rest[3] or that would make it move in other than a straight line. The motions in a straight line, which are found to belong to these four elements when they move in order to return to their places, are two: a motion toward the encompassing sphere, which motion belongs to fire and to air, and a motion toward the center of the world, which belongs to water and to earth. Every body belonging to these four elements comes to rest when it reaches its natural place.

As for the bodies that move in circles, they are animate, endowed with a soul that makes them move. And there is in time no principle at all that would make them to be at rest. No change attains them, except with regard to position, as they move in a circle. As regards the question whether they

2. On the astronomical problems referred to, cf. Translator's Introduction.

3. The principle to which Maimonides refers is closely connected with what medieval philosophy designates as the natural inclination of the elements, i.e., the heaviness of earth and water and the lightness of fire and air. In their natural places the elements have no natural inclination, according to Avicenna. If, however, a portion of one of them has been displaced, it tends to move downward, if it is heavy, or upward, if it is light. In this passage Maimonides apparently wishes to assert, among other things, that a displaced portion of an element does not have a principle of rest, but has the impulse to move toward its natural place.

have an intellect by means of which they make mental representations: this does not become clear except after subtle speculation.

Inasmuch as the fifth body as a whole is engaged perpetually in a circular motion, it thus engenders forced motion in the elements because of which they leave their places. I have in view fire and air, which are pushing toward the water. All of them penetrate toward the body of the earth, in the valleys. In consequence a mixture of the elements comes about. Afterwards they start to move in order to return to their places; and because of this, portions of the earth in their turn are made to leave their places as they accompany the water, the air, and the fire. In all this, the elements exert influence upon one another and are influenced by one another. Accordingly changes occur in the mixture so that, in the first place, | the various species of vapors come into being from it, then the various species of minerals, then all the species of plants, then many species of living beings in accordance with what is determined by the composition[4] of the mixture. Everything that is subject to generation and corruption is generated from the elements and, being corrupted, passes away into them. The elements likewise are generated from one another and, being corrupted, pass away into one another; for the matter of the all is one; and the existence of matter without form is impossible and, on the other hand, no natural form subject to generation and corruption exists without matter. Thus the state of things with regard to the generation and corruption of the elements and with regard to the generation of everything that is generated of them and is corrupted so as again to be changed into them, comes back in a circle similar to the circular movement of heaven; so that the movement of this matter endowed with forms is, in respect to the succession of the forms subsisting in it, like the movement of heaven in respect to the "where," every part of heaven returning repeatedly to the selfsame positions.

And just as in the body of man there are ruling parts and ruled parts requiring for their continued existence the governance of the ruling part governing them, so are there in the world as a whole ruling parts — namely, the fifth encompassing body — and ruled parts requiring a governor — they are the elements and what is composed of them. And just as the ruling part, which is the heart, is always in motion and is the principle of every motion to be found in the body, whereas the other parts of the body are ruled by the heart, which in virtue of its motion sends toward them the forces they require for their functions; so heaven in virtue of its motion exerts governance over the other parts of the world and sends to every generated thing

4. Or: temperament.

the forces that subsist in the latter. Accordingly, every motion existing in the world has as its first principle the motion of heaven, and every soul existing in the beings endowed with souls that are in the world | has as its principle the soul of heaven.

Know that, as has been made clear, the forces that come from heaven to this world are four: [1] the force that necessitates the mixture and composition – there is no doubt that this force suffices to engender the minerals; [2] the force that gives to every plant a vegetal soul; [3] the force that gives to every animal an animal soul; [4] the force that gives to every rational being a rational faculty.[5] All this takes place through the intermediary of the illumination and the darkness [on earth] resulting from the light in heaven and from heaven's motion round the earth [which is the cause of the succession of days and nights]. And just as an individual would die and his motions and forces would be abolished if the heart were to come to rest even for an instant, so the death of the world as a whole and the abolition of everything within it would result if the heavens were to come to rest. And just as a living being lives as a whole in virtue of the motion of its heart, even if there subsist in it parts of the body that are at rest and not sentient – as for instance bones, cartilage, and others; so is this whole being one individual that lives in virtue of the movement of heaven, which has with regard to it the rank that the heart has with regard to the beings endowed with hearts – and this even though there are in the world many inanimate bodies that are at rest.

Accordingly it behooves you to represent to yourself in this fashion the whole of this sphere as one living individual in motion and possessing a soul. For this way of representing the matter to oneself is most necessary or most useful for the demonstration that the deity is one, as shall be made clear. By means of this representation it will also be made clear that the One has created one being. For just as it is impossible that the limbs of a man should exist separately while being truly the part of a man – I mean to say that the liver should exist separately or the heart should exist separately or the flesh should exist separately – so is it impossible that the parts of the world should exist, in this permanent existence | with which our discourse is concerned, without one another in such a way that light would exist without the earth or the earth without the heaven[6] or the heaven without the earth. And just as in this human individual there is a force that connects

5. Or: force.
6. The Arabic term *samāʾ* is used here, and not the term *falak*, which in other passages of this chapter has been translated by "heaven."

the parts of his body one with the other, that governs them, provides every part of the body with what is needed for the safeguard of its well-being, and wards off from it that which harms – namely, the force of which the physicians have clearly spoken and which they have designated as the force governing the body of living beings and have frequently named "nature"; so there subsists in the world as a whole a force that connects its portions one with the other, safeguards its various species from perishing, safeguards also the individuals belonging to its species for the time for which it is possible to safeguard them, and also safeguards some of the individuals of the world.[7] As to this force, there is speculation whether or not it subsists through the intermediary of heaven. Furthermore, in the body of a human individual there are things that are intended: the purpose of some of them – for instance, that of the organs of nutrition – being the continued existence of the individual; that of others – for instance, that of the organs of procreation – the continued existence of the species; while that of others again – of the hands and the eyes for instance – is related to the needs to which he is compelled in his nutrition and suchlike matters and other things that are not intended for themselves but are connected with, and consequent upon, the composition of the parts of the body, that particular composition being necessary for the achievement of the form in question as it is, so that it should carry out the intended actions. Accordingly, the fact that certain things are intended has as a consequence other things, as for instance the hair and the color of the body, because of the necessity inherent in matter. For this reason the state of these latter things does not follow an orderly arrangement; some of them are frequently lacking, and the differences between the various individuals with respect to their superiority or inferiority in these things are very great, which is not the case with regard to the parts of the body. For you do not find an individual who has a liver | that is ten times as big as the liver of another individual, but you do find a man lacking a beard or hair on certain parts of his body or who has a beard that is ten or twenty times as big as the beard of another individual. In fact this occurs in the majority of cases belonging to this category; I mean differences due to superiority or inferiority as regards hair or color. Now similarly in being as a whole, there are species whose generation is intended, stable, and subsisting according to an orderly arrangement, and between which there are only small differences to the extent of an accident that may have befallen that particular species with regard to its quality and quantity; and there are species that are not intended, but are consequent upon the

7. Probably such individuals as the heavenly bodies are meant.

nature of universal generation and corruption – for instance, the various species of worms that are engendered from dung and the various species of living beings that are engendered in fruit when it is putrefying and those that are engendered from the putrefaction of moistures and the worms engendered in the intestines and other things of that kind. Generally speaking, it seems to me that every living being that has not the faculty of procreating its like belongs to this group, and for this reason you will not find that they keep to an orderly arrangement even though they cannot but exist, just as is the case for different colors and for different species of hair in human individuals.

And just as in man there are bodies constituting species, the individuals of which are stable as the fundamental parts of the body, and other bodies having continued existence in this species, not in the individual; so are there in being as a whole stable bodies having continued existence as individuals, namely, the fifth body in all its parts, and bodies having continued existence as a species, such as the elements and what is composed of them.

And just as the forces of man that necessitate his generation and continued existence for the time in which he continues to exist are identical with those necessitating his corruption and passing-away, so are the causes of generation in the whole world of generation and corruption identical with those of corruption. To take an example: | if it were possible that the four faculties that are to be found in the body of every being that nourishes itself – namely, the attractive faculty, the retentive faculty, the digestive faculty, and the repellent faculty – be like the intellectual faculties and not act except as is proper, in the time in which it is proper, and in the measure in which it is proper, man would be preserved from many very great afflictions and from a number of diseases. However, as this is impossible and these faculties carry out natural activities without reflection and discernment and do not apprehend in any respect the activities they carry out, it follows necessarily that grave disease and affliction occur because of them, even though these faculties are at the same time the instrument through which living beings are produced and have a continued existence during the time in which they have it.

This can be made clear as follows. If, to take an example, the attractive faculty would draw to the human body only things that are suitable in every respect and only to the extent needed, man would be preserved from many diseases and afflictions. But as this is not so, and it draws to the body any matter that happens to belong to the genus it attracts even if that

matter diverges slightly from the norm in its quantity and quality, it follows necessarily that it draws to the body matter that is warmer or colder, coarser or finer, than is needed, or more of it than is needed. Consequently the veins are plugged up with this matter, sclerosis and putrefaction occur, the quality of the humors is corrupted and their quantity changed; whereupon diseases appear such as scab, itch, and warts, or great afflictions such as cancerous growths, elephantiasis, and canker, so that the form of one or several parts of the body is corrupted.

This is the case also with regard to the other four faculties in question. And this is also the case with regard to all that exists as a whole. For the thing that necessitates the generation of what is generated and the permanence of its existence | for some time is the mixing of the elements through the heavenly forces that move them and pervade them. And this is the very cause of the occurrence of causes of damage in that which exists — such as torrents, harmful rains, snow, hail, tempestuous winds, thunder, lightning, and the putrefaction of the air — or of the occurrence of causes that are very destructive and may bring about the annihilation of one or several lands or of a whole geographical zone — such causes are the sinking of land, earthquakes, hurricanes, and water overflowing from the seas and the depths.

Know that it was not because of all that we have mentioned in comparing the world as a whole to a human individual that it has been said about man that he is a small world. For this whole comparison can be consistently applied to every individual animal that has perfect limbs; but you never hear that one of the ancients[8] has said that an ass or a horse is a small world. This has been said only about man. This is because of that which is a proprium of man only, namely, the rational faculty — I mean the intellect, which is the hylic intellect; something that is not to be found in any of the species of living beings other than man. This can be explained as follows. None of the individual animals requires for its continued existence reflection, perspicacity, and governance of conduct. For it goes about and runs in accordance with its nature, eating what it finds from among the things suitable to it, inhabiting any place to which it has happened to come, and copulating with any female it finds during its heat, if it has a period of heat. Consequently the individual remains in existence during the time in which it exists,[9] and the existence of the species continues; such an individual does not require in any respect another individual belonging to its species to help and sustain it by making for it things | that it does not make

8. Literally: first. 9. Literally: remains in existence.

itself. As for man, and only man, let us suppose the case of an individual belonging to the human species that existed alone, had lost the governance of its conduct, and had become like the beasts. Such an individual would perish immediately; he could not last even one day except by accident—I mean if he should happen to find something he might feed on. For the foods through which he exists require the application of some art and a lengthy management that cannot be made perfect except through thought and perspicacity, as well as with the help of many tools and many individuals, every one of whom devotes himself to one single occupation. For this reason one is needed who would rule them and hold them together so that their society would be orderly and have continued existence in order that the various individuals should help one another. Similarly the precautions against heat in the hot season and against cold in the cold season and the finding of protection against the rains, the snow, and the blowing of winds, require arrangements for many preparations, none of which can be perfected except through thought and perspicacity. Because of this one finds in man the rational faculty in virtue of which he thinks, exerts his perspicacity, works, and prepares by means of various arts his food, his habitation, and his clothing. Through it he rules all the parts of his body in such a way that the ruling part acts in the way it does and the ruled part is governed the way it is ruled. Because of this a human individual who, according to a supposition you might make, would be deprived of this faculty and left only with the animal faculties, would perish and be destroyed immediately. This faculty is very noble indeed, being the noblest of the faculties of the living beings. It is also very secret, and its true reality cannot be understood at the first attempt of common opinion, as one can understand the other natural faculties.

In the same way there exists in being something that rules it as a whole and puts into motion its first principal part[10] granting it the power of putting into motion, in virtue of which this part governs the things that are other than itself. | And if one supposed that this thing had passed into nothingness, it would have to be supposed that the existence of this sphere as a whole, that of its principal and that of its subordinate parts, had also passed into nothingness. For it is in virtue of this thing that the existence of the sphere and of every part of it endures. This thing is the deity, may its name be exalted. It is only with a view to this that it is said of man alone that he is a small world, inasmuch as there subsists in him a certain principle that governs the whole of him. And because of this, God, may He be

10. The Arabic term used here has been translated elsewhere "part of the body."

exalted, is called in our language the life of the world. Thus it is said: *And swore by the living of the world.*[11]

Know that in this comparison that we have established between the world as a whole and a human individual, there is a discrepancy with respect to what we have mentioned only with regard to three points. The first is this. The ruling part of every living being possessing a heart is profited by the ruled parts; the profit deriving from the latter accrues to it so as to be useful to it. There is nothing like this in the universal being. For to no being, the governance of which overflows or confers a force, does any profit accrue in any respect from that which is ruled by it. For its giving the gifts it gives is like the giving of gifts on the parts of a generous and superior man who does it because of the nobility of his nature and the excellence of his disposition, not because of a hope for a reward: this is to become like to the deity, may His name be exalted.

The second point is this. The heart of every living being possessing a heart is in its middle; thus the other ruled parts surround it so that the utility deriving from them should extend to it wholly in that it is protected and safeguarded by them in such a way that harm coming from outside cannot rapidly reach it. Now in the world as a whole, the position is inverse. Its nobler part surrounds its inferior part, for the former is secure against receiving an influence from what is other than itself. And even if it were capable of receiving such an influence, it would not find outside itself another body that could influence it. Accordingly, this part occasions an overflow into what is inside it, whereas no influence reaches it in any respect nor any force deriving from | bodies other than itself. With regard to this point there is also a certain similarity. For in the living being, a part is less noble than other parts to the extent to which it is far off from the ruling part, whereas other parts are nearer to the latter. The position in the world as a whole is the same. For whenever the bodies are near the center, they grow dimmer and their substance coarser, and their motion becomes more difficult, while their light and transparency disappear because of their distance from the noble, luminous, transparent, moving, subtle, and simple body—I mean heaven. On the other hand, whenever bodies are near the latter, they acquire some of these characteristics because of their proximity to it and achieve a certain superiority over what is lower than they.

The third point is this. The rational faculty is a faculty subsisting in a body and is not separable from it, whereas God, may He be exalted, is not a faculty subsisting in the body of the world, but is separate from all parts of

11. Dan. 12:7.

the world. For the governance and the providence of Him, may He be exalted, accompany the world as a whole in such a way that the manner and true reality of this accompaniment are hidden from us; the faculties of human beings are inadequate to understand this. On the one hand, there is a demonstration of His separateness, may He be exalted, from the world and of His being free from it; and on the other hand, there is a demonstration that the influence of His governance and providence[12] in every part of the world, however small and contemptible, exists. May He whose perfection has dazzled us be glorified!

Know that it behooved us to compare the relation obtaining between God, may He be exalted, and the world to that obtaining between the acquired intellect and man; this intellect is not a faculty in the body but is truly separate from the organic body and overflows toward it. We should have compared, on the other hand, the rational faculty to the intellects of the heavens, which are in bodies. However, the case of the intellects of the heavens, that of the existence of separate intellects, and that of the representation of the acquired intellect, which is also separate, are matters open to speculation | and research. The proofs with regard to them are well hidden though correct; many doubts arise with regard to them; the critic may well find in them objects for his criticism and the caviller objects for his cavilling. We have preferred that at first you should represent to yourself that which exists in clear form. As far as this form is concerned, no one could be unaware of any point we have mentioned by way of simple[13] assertion unless he belongs to one of two kinds of individuals: that which is ignorant of matters that are clear — just as one who is not a geometrician is unaware of mathematical matters that have been demonstrated — or that which prefers to hold fast to a certain opinion that the individual in question had adopted previously so that he deceives himself. On the other hand, he who wishes to engage in true speculation should study until the correctness of everything we have narrated becomes clear to him. He then will know that this is the form of this permanent existent whose existence is beyond doubt and dispute. If he wishes to accept this as true from one to whom all the demonstrations of the demonstrated points are known, let him accept it in this way and build on it syllogisms and proofs. If, however, he prefers not to rely on authority — not even with regard to these first principles — he should study, and in due course of time it will become clear to him that

12. I read *wa-ʿināyatihi* instead of *ʿināyatihi* (Joel ed., p. 134, l. 3).
13. *mursal*, a term that sometimes means "absolute." Maimonides means to say that in this chapter his exposé was not accompanied by proofs.

matters are just as they have been stated. *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is, hear it, and know thou it.*[14]

After this simplifying presentation, I shall begin to mention what we have promised to mention and to explain.

CHAPTER 73

The common premises laid down by the Mutakallimūn, in spite of the diversity of their opinions and the multiplicity of their methods, that are necessary with a view to establishing what they wish to establish with regard to the four problems in question, are twelve in number. I shall mention them to you and afterwards I shall explain to you the meaning of each of these premises and what necessarily follows from it.[1] |

The first premise: establishing the existence of atoms.[2] The second premise: the existence of a vacuum. The third premise: time is composed of instants.[3] The fourth premise: that substance[4] cannot be exempt from a certain number of accidents. The fifth premise: that the accidents that I shall describe subsist in the atom, which cannot be exempt from them. The sixth premise: that an accident does not endure for two units of time. The seventh premise: that the status of the habitus is that of their privation and that the former and the latter are all of them existent accidents requiring an efficient cause. The eighth premise: that nothing except substances and accidents subsist in all that exists—they mean to say, in all the created things—and that natural form is likewise an accident. The ninth premise: that accidents do not support one another.[5] The tenth premise: that the possibility of a thing should not be considered in establishing a correspondence between that which exists and mental representation. The eleventh premise: that with regard to the impossibility of the infinite, there is no difference between the latter's existing in actu, in potentia, or by accident; I mean to say that there is no difference between the simultaneous existence

14. Job 5:27.
1. On Maimonides' exposition of the views of the Mutakallimūn, cf. Translator's Introduction.
2. The term used can also mean "separate substance." 3. Literally: "now's."
4. The term can also mean "atom." However, comparison with Maimonides' exposition of this premise farther on in this chapter shows that the translation "substance" seems indicated.
5. This means that an accident cannot inhere in another accident.

of those infinite things, or their being supposed to be made up of what exists and of what has ceased to exist, which is infinity by accident. They say that all these kinds of infinity are impossible. The twelfth premise consists in their saying that the senses commit mistakes and that many of the objects of their apprehension elude them and for this reason their judgment should not be appealed to and they should not be regarded in absolute fashion as principles of demonstration. After having thus enumerated these common premises, I shall start to explain their meanings and to explain what necessarily follows from every one of them.|

THE FIRST PREMISE

Its meaning is that they thought that the world as a whole—I mean to say every body in it—is composed of very small particles that, because of their subtlety, are not subject to division. The individual particle does not possess quantity in any respect. However, when several are aggregated, their aggregate possesses quantity and has thus become a body. If two particles are aggregated together, then according to the statements of some of them, every particle has in that case become a body, so that there are two bodies. All these particles are alike and similar to one another, there being no difference between them in any respect whatever. And, as they say, it is impossible that a body should exist in any respect except it be composed of these particles, which are alike in such a way that they are adjacent to one another. In this way, according to them, generation consists in aggregation, and corruption in separation. They do not, however, call this process corruption, but say that there are the following generations: aggregation and separation, motion and rest. They also say that these particles are not restricted in their existence,[6] as was believed by Epicurus and others who affirmed the existence of such particles; for they say that God, may He be exalted, creates these substances constantly whenever He wishes, and that their annihilation is likewise possible. Further on, I shall let you hear their opinions regarding the annihilation of substance.

THE SECOND PREMISE

The assertion concerning the vacuum. The men concerned with the roots [the Mutakallimūn] believe likewise that vacuum exists and that it is a certain space[7] or spaces in which there is nothing at all, being accordingly

6. Perhaps in point of numbers. Ibn Tibbon's translation of the phrase could be rendered: do not exist from of old.
7. When used by philosophers, the word *bu'd* often means "dimension."

empty of all bodies, devoid of all substance. This premise is necessary for them because of their belief in the first premise. For if the world were full of the particles in question, how | can a thing in motion move? It would also be impossible to represent to oneself that bodies can penetrate one another. Now there can be no aggregation and no separation of these particles except through their motions. Accordingly they must of necessity resort to the affirmation of vacuum so that it should be possible for these particles to aggregate and to separate and so that it should be possible for a moving thing to move in this vacuum in which there is no body and none of these substances.[8]

THE THIRD PREMISE

This is their saying that time is composed of instants, by which they mean that there are many units of time that, because of the shortness of their duration, are not divisible. This premise is also necessary for them because of the first premise. For they undoubtedly had seen Aristotle's demonstrations, by means of which he has demonstrated that distance, time, and locomotion are all three of them equal as far as existence is concerned. I mean to say that their relation to one another is the same and that when one of them is divided the other two are likewise divided and in the same proportion. Accordingly they knew necessarily that if time were continuous and infinitely divisible, it would follow of necessity that the particles that they had supposed to be indivisible would also be divisible. Similarly if distance were supposed to be continuous, it would follow of necessity that the instant that had been supposed to be indivisible would be divisible—just as Aristotle had made it clear in the "Akroasis." Therefore they supposed that distance is not continuous, but composed of parts at which divisibility comes to an end, and that likewise the division of time ends with the instants that are not divisible. For example, an hour | consists of sixty minutes, a minute of sixty seconds, and a second of sixty thirds. And thus this division of time ends up accordingly with parts constituting, for instance, tenths or something even briefer, which cannot in any respect be separated in their turn into parts and are not subject to division, just as extension is not subject to it. Consequently, time becomes endowed with position and order. In fact they have no knowledge at all of the true reality of time. And this is only appropriate with regard to them; for seeing that the cleverest philosophers were confused by the question of time and that some of them did not understand its notion—so that Galen could say that

8. Here the word denotes "atoms."

it is a divine thing, the true reality of which cannot be perceived—this applies all the more to those who pay no attention to the nature of any thing.

Hear now what they were compelled to admit as a necessary consequence of these three premises and what they therefore believed. They said that motion is the passage of an atom belonging to these particles from one atom to another that is contiguous to it. It follows that no movement can be more rapid than another movement. In accordance with this assumption, they said that when you see that two things in motion traverse two different distances in the same time, the cause of this phenomenon does not lie in the greater rapidity of the motion of the body traversing the longer distance; but the cause of this lies in the motion that we call slower being interrupted by a greater number of units of rest than is the case with regard to the motion we call more rapid, which is interrupted by fewer units of rest. And when the example of an arrow shot from a strong bow was alleged as an objection against them, they said that the motions of the arrow were also interrupted by units of rest. In fact your thinking that a certain object is moving in continuous motion is due to an error of the senses, for many of the objects of the perception of the senses elude the latter, as they lay down in the twelfth premise. In consequence, it was said to them: Have you seen a millstone making | a complete revolution? Has not the part that is at its circumference traversed the distance represented by the bigger[9] circle in the same time in which the part near the center has traversed the distance represented by the smaller[10] circle? Accordingly the motion of the circumference is more rapid than the motion of the inner circle. And there is no opportunity for you to assert that the motion of the latter part is interrupted by a greater number of units of rest as the whole body is one and continuous, I mean the body of the millstone. Their answer to this objection is that the various portions of the millstone become separated from one another in the course of its revolution and that the units of rest that interrupt the motion of all the revolving portions that are near the center are more numerous than the units of rest that interrupt the the motion of the parts that are farther off from the center. Thereupon it was said to them: How then do we perceive the millstone as one body that cannot be broken up even by hammers? One must accordingly assume that when it turns round, it splits into pieces; and when it comes to rest, it is welded up and becomes as it was before. How is it that one does not perceive its portions as separated from one another? Thereupon, in order to reply to

9. Literally: big. 10. Literally: small.

this, they had recourse to the same twelfth premise, which states that one should not take into account the apprehensions of the senses, but rather the testimony of the intellect.

You should not think that the doctrines I have explained to you are the most abhorrent of the corollaries necessarily following from those three premises, for the doctrine that necessarily follows from the belief in the existence of a vacuum is even stranger and more abhorrent. Furthermore, the doctrine that I have mentioned to you with regard to motion is not more abhorrent than the assertion going with this view that the diagonal of a square is equal to one of its sides, so that some of them say that the square is a nonexistent thing. To sum up: By virtue of the first premise all geometrical demonstrations become invalid, and they belong to either one or the other of two categories. Some of them are absolutely invalid, as for instance those referring to the properties of incommensurability and commensurability of lines and planes and the existence | of rational and irrational lines and all that are included in the tenth book of Euclid and those that resemble them. As for the others, the demonstrations proving them are not cogent, as when we say we want to divide a line into two equal halves. For in the case in which the number of its atoms[11] is odd, the division of the line into two equal parts is impossible according to their assumption. Know, moreover, that the Banū Shākir have composed the famous "Book of Ingenious Devices," which includes one hundred odd ingenious devices, all of them demonstrated and carried into effect. But if vacuum had existed, not one of them would have been valid, and many of the contrivances to make water flow would not have existed. In spite of this, the lives [of the Mutakallimūn] have been spent in argumentation with a view to establishing the validity of these premises and others resembling them. I shall now return to the explanation of the meaning of their remaining premises that were mentioned.

THE FOURTH PREMISE

This is their saying that the accidents exist, and that they are something superadded to the something that is the substance, and that no body is exempt from one of them. If this premise did not mean more than this, it would be a correct, clear, evident premise, and give rise to no doubt and no difficulty. However, they say that in every substance in which there does not subsist the accident of life, there necessarily subsists the accident of

11. It is to be borne in mind throughout this chapter that the same Arabic term is being translated variously as "atom(s)" or "substance(s)."

death, for the recipient cannot but receive one of two contraries. They say: similarly it has a color, a taste, motion or rest, aggregation or separation. And if the accident of life subsists in it, there cannot but subsist in it other genera of accidents such as knowledge or ignorance, or will or its contrary, | or power or powerlessness, or apprehension or one of its contraries. To sum up: there must necessarily subsist in it all the accidents that may subsist in a living being or one of their contraries.

THE FIFTH PREMISE

This is their saying that these accidents subsist in the atom and that it cannot be exempt from them. The explanation and the meaning of this premise are as follows. They say that every atom of the atoms that God creates is provided with accidents from which it cannot be exempt; such accidents, for example, as color, smell, motion or rest, but not quantity — since these atoms do not possess quantity. For in accordance with their opinion, they do not call quantity an accident and do not understand that quantity includes the notion of accidentality. In virtue of this premise, they hold with regard to all accidents subsisting in a body that it should not be said that one of them is a proprium of that body as a whole; for the accident in question subsists, according to them, in every atom of the atoms of which that body is composed. For instance, in the case of this piece of snow, the whiteness does not subsist only in the entire whole; rather every single atom of the atoms of the snow is white, and it is because of this that whiteness subsists in their aggregate. In a similar way they say of a body in motion that every atom of its atoms is in motion and that because of this it is in motion as a whole. Similarly life subsists, according to them, in every single part of the living body, and also the senses; every atom is a whole endowed with sensation, being according to them endowed with sensation. | For life, the senses, intellect, and knowledge are, according to them, accidents just as blackness and whiteness are, as we shall make clear on the basis of their doctrines. As regards the soul, they disagree; the opinion of most of them[12] is that it is an accident subsisting in one atom that belongs to the whole consisting of the atoms of which man, for example, is composed. This whole is designated as being endowed with a soul because of the fact that that atom subsists in it. Some of them, however, affirm that the soul is a body composed of subtle atoms and that these atoms are doubtless provided with a certain accident, which is their proprium and in virtue of which they become a soul. They affirm that these atoms are mixed with the

12. Literally: most of their assertions.

atoms of the organic body. Accordingly they are not exempt from the belief that the thing that is the soul is an accident. As for the intellect, I consider that they are unanimous in thinking that it is an accident subsisting in an atom belonging to an intellectually cognizing whole. As regards knowledge, there is perplexity among them over whether it is an accident subsisting in every atom belonging to the whole endowed with knowledge, or an accident subsisting in one atom only. Both affirmations entail abhorrent conclusions. It has been objected against them that we find that most minerals and stones have a very intense color, but when they are pulverized this color disappears. Thus when we pulverize the intensely green emerald, it turns into white dust – which is proof that the accident in question resides in the whole and not in every particle included in that whole. It is even more manifest that parts cut off from a living being are not alive – which is proof that this entity[13] is constituted by the whole and not by each of the parts included in that whole. In answer to this, they say that the accident in question has no continued existence, but is always created anew, as I shall explain on the basis of their opinion as formulated in the next premise. |

THE SIXTH PREMISE

It consists in their assertion that an accident does not last during two units of time. The meaning of this premise is as follows. They think that God, may He be glorified and magnified, creates an atom and creates together with it, at one and the same time, any accident He wills as an accident subsisting in the atom. For it may not be predicated of Him, may He be exalted, that He has the power to create an atom without an accident, for this is impossible. Now the true reality of an accident and its notion consist in its not enduring or lasting during two units of time, by which they mean: two instants. While this accident is being created, it disappears, having no continued existence. Whereupon God creates another accident of the same species, which accident disappears in its turn; whereupon He creates a third one belonging to the same species, and so on always in the same way in the period during which God wishes the species of that accident to last. If, however, He, may He be exalted, wishes to create in the atom another species of accident, He does so. If, however, He refrains from the act of creation and does not create an accident, the atom in question becomes nonexistent. This is the opinion of some of them – namely, of those who are the majority – this being the creation of accidents, which

13. Namely, life.

they affirm. However, some of them belonging to the Muʿtazila assert that some accidents last for a certain time, whereas others do not last during two units of time. As to this, they have no rule to which to refer so as to be able to say: this particular species of accidents lasts and that other does not. What led them to this opinion is that it is not to be said that there is a nature in any respect whatever and that the nature of one particular body may require that this and that accident be attached to that body. Quite the contrary, they wish to say that God, may He be exalted, created the accidents in question now, without the intermediary of nature — without any other thing. But if this is asserted, it follows according to them necessarily that | that accident in question does not last; for if you should say that it lasts for some time and then becomes nonexistent, it becomes necessary to inquire what thing has caused it to become nonexistent. If you should say thereupon that God, if He wills, causes it to become nonexistent, this answer would not be valid according to their opinion. For an agent does not act to bring about nonexistence, since nonexistence does not require an agent. On the contrary, the nonexistence of an act comes about when the agent refrains from acting. This is valid in a certain respect. For this reason, accordingly, their assertions led them — as they wished that there be no nature necessitating the existence or the nonexistence of a thing — to the point of affirming the creation of successive accidents. According to some of them, when God wishes to cause the nonexistence of a substance, He does not create an accident in it, in consequence whereof the substance becomes nonexistent. Others affirm that if God should wish the world to be annihilated, He would create in it the accident of passing-away — an accident that would be without a substratum. Thereupon this accident of passing-away would be opposed to the existence of the world. In accordance with this premise, they assert that when we, as we think, dye a garment red, it is not we who are by any means the dyers; God rather creates the color in question in the garment when the latter is in juxtaposition with the red dye, which we consider to have gone over to the garment. They say that this is not the case, but that God has instituted a habit according to which, for example, black color does not appear except when a garment is juxtaposed with indigo. However, this blackness, which God creates when an object about to turn black is juxtaposed with blackness, does not last, but disappears instantly, and another blackness is created. God has also instituted the habit of not creating, after the disappearance of blackness, redness or yellowness, but a blackness similar to the one before. In conformity with this assumption, they have drawn the corollary that the things we know

now | are not identical with the contents of the knowledge known by us yesterday; for that knowledge has become nonexistent, and another knowledge similar to it has been created. They maintain that this is so, because knowledge is an accident. Similarly it necessarily behooves those who believe that the soul is an accident to consider that, to take an example, one hundred thousand souls are created every minute for the requirements of every being endowed with a soul. For as you know, time, according to them, is composed of indivisible instants. In conformity with this premise, they assert that when a man moves a pen, it is not the man who moves it; for the motion occurring in the pen is an accident created by God in the pen. Similarly the motion of the hand, which we think of as moving the pen, is an accident created by God in the moving hand. Only, God has instituted the habit that the motion of the hand is concomitant[14] with the motion of the pen, without the hand exercising in any respect an influence on, or being causative in regard to, the motion of the pen. For they maintain that an accident does not go beyond its substratum. There is unanimity among them with regard to their belief that a white garment that has been put into a vat full of indigo and has become dyed, has not been blackened by the indigo, blackness being an accident that is inherent in the body that is the indigo and that does not go beyond it so as to affect something else. According to them, there is no body at all endowed with the power of action. On the other hand, the ultimate agent is God; and it is He who, in view of the fact that He has instituted such a habit, has created the blackness in the body that is the garment when the latter was juxtaposed with indigo.

To sum up: it should not be said in any respect that this is the cause of that. This is the opinion of the multitude [of the Mutakallimūn]. One[15] of them, however, maintained the doctrine of causality and in consequence was regarded as abhorrent by them. As for the actions of man, they are in disagreement about them. The doctrine of the majority and in particular that of the multitude of the Ashᶜariyya is that when the pen is put into motion, God creates four accidents, no one of which is a cause of any other—all of them being concomitant | in regard to their existence, not otherwise. The first accident is my will to put the pen into motion; the second accident, my power to put it into motion; the third accident, human motion itself—I mean the motion of the hand; the fourth accident, the motion of the pen.

14. The Arabic term *qārana* is used; it also occurs in an earlier passage in this chapter adducing the example of the dyeing of a garment. In that passage the term is translated by the verb "juxtapose" or its derivatives.

15. The word may also denote several individuals.

For they think that when a man wills a thing and, as he thinks, does it, his will is created for him, his power to do that which he wills is created for him, and his act is created for him. For he does not act in virtue of the power created in him, and the power has no influence on the action. On the other hand, the Muʿtazila maintain that man acts in virtue of the power created in him; and one of the Ashʿariyya says that this created power has a certain influence on, and connection with, the act. But they regard this as abhorrent. As all of them think, the created will and the created power and—in the opinion of some of them—also the created act, are accidents that do not last, God constantly creating in that way motion after motion in the pen in question as long as the pen is in motion. Thereafter, when it comes to rest, it does so only after He has created in it a unit of rest. And He does not cease to create in it one unit of rest after another as long as the pen is at rest. Accordingly God creates at every one of the instants—I mean the separate units of time—an accident in every individual among the beings, whether that individual be an angel, a heavenly sphere, or something else. This He does constantly at every moment of time. They maintain that this is the true faith in God's activity; and in their opinion, he who does not believe that God acts in this way denies the fact that God acts. With regard to beliefs of this kind, it has been said in my opinion and in that of everybody endowed with an intellect: *Or as one mocketh | a man, do ye so mock him*[16]—this being in truth the very essence of *mockery*.

THE SEVENTH PREMISE

It consists in their belief that privations of habitus are things that exist in a body, being superadded to its substance, and are accordingly also existent accidents. In consequence they are always being created, and whenever one of them disappears, another is created. The explanation is as follows. They do not hold that rest is the privation of motion, that death is the privation of life, and that blindness is the privation of sight; in fact they do not believe this with regard to any privations of habitus similar to those mentioned. For according to them, the status[17] of motion and rest is the same as that of heat and cold. For just as heat and cold are accidents existing in the hot and cold substrata, motion is an accident created in the moving body, and rest an accident which God creates in the body that is at rest, which accident likewise does not last for two units of time, as has been set forth before in the preceding premise. According to them, God has created

16. Job 13:9. 17. Literally: judgment.

a unit of rest in every particle of the body that is at rest and, as long as it is at rest, creates another unit of rest every time a unit of it becomes nonexistent. The position is completely analogous, according to them, with regard to knowledge and ignorance. According to them, the latter exists and is an accident. In consequence, a unit of ignorance continually disappears and another is created as long as a particular ignorant individual continues to be ignorant in anything. The position is also completely analogous with regard to life and death. For both of these are, according to them, accidents, and they clearly assert that a unit of life disappears and another is created as long as a particular living being is alive. Then, when God wills its death, He creates in it the accident of death following upon the disappearance of the accident of life, which | does not last two units of time. All this they assert clearly. Now according to this assumption, it clearly follows that the accident of death, which God creates, likewise becomes nonexistent after a moment of time, so that God creates another unit of death. But for that, death would not last. However, as one unit of life is created after another, one unit of death is created after another. Would that I knew till when God creates the accident of death in a dead individual; does He do so as long as that individual's external form endures, or as long as one of that individual's atoms endures? For, according to what they wish, God creates the accident of death in every single atom of the atoms of the individual in question. Now we find molars of dead individuals that are thousands of years old. Accordingly this is a proof that God has not annihilated that substance. In consequence, He should be creating in it the accident of death all through these thousands of years, creating a unit of death as soon as another unit of it disappears. This is the doctrine of the multitude of them. However one Muʿtazilite says that certain privations of habitus are not existent things. He does not, however, say this consistently with regard to every privation. Thus he does not say that darkness is the privation of light, that rest is the privation of motion. In fact he regards some of the privations as existent and some others as being merely a privation of habitus, just as it suits him with respect to his belief. They did a similar thing with regard to the continued existence of accidents. For according to them, some of the accidents last for some time, whereas others do not last for two units of time. For the purpose of all of them is to suppose an existent universe,[18] the nature of which fits in with our opinions and teachings.

18. Literally: an existence. The meaning is: all that which is existent.

THE EIGHTH PREMISE

It consists in their assertion that there exists nothing except substances and accidents and that the natural forms | are likewise accidents. The explanation of this premise is as follows. According to them, all bodies are composed of atoms resembling one another, as we have made clear when setting out the first of their premises. These atoms differ from one another only with regard to accidents and in nothing else. Thus according to them, animality, humanity, sensation, and rationality are all accidents having the same status as whiteness, blackness, bitterness, and sweetness, so that the difference existing between an individual belonging to one species and an individual belonging to another is like the difference between individuals belonging to the same species. In consequence, the body of heaven, even the body of the angels, or even the body of [God's] throne, as it is imagined in fantasy, and the body of any insect you like from among the insects of the earth or of any plant you like, are, according to them, of one substance, differing only with regard to accidents and in nothing else. And the substances of which the universe is composed are the atoms.

THE NINTH PREMISE

It consists in their assertion that accidents do not serve as a substratum for one another. According to them, it may not be said that one accident has as its substratum another, which latter has as its substratum a substance. In their opinion all accidents, in the first place and in the same way, have substance as a substratum.[19] They avoid the opposing doctrine because it has as its necessary consequence that an ultimate accident may not subsist in a substance unless a primary accident precedes it in subsisting in it. They do not wish to admit this in the case of certain accidents, desiring to create the possibility that certain accidents may subsist in any substance that they may happen to encounter without any need for another accident previously providing the substance with a proprium. This is in accordance with their view that all accidents provide a proprium. Furthermore, from | another angle it may be seen that the substratum to which an accident may attach itself[20] has to be stable and has to endure for a certain time. However, as an accident, according to them, does not last for two units of time—I mean for two instants—how can it be possible according to this hypothesis that it should serve as a substratum for something other than itself?

19. Literally: are borne in a primary bearing on substance.
20. Literally: upon which that which is borne is borne.

THE TENTH PREMISE

It consists in the affirmation of admissibility that they mention. This is the main proposition of the science of kalām. Listen to its meaning. They are of the opinion that everything that may be imagined is an admissible notion for the intellect. For instance, it is admissible from the point of view of intellect that it should come about that the sphere of the earth should turn into a heaven endowed with circular motion and that the heaven should turn into the sphere of the earth. Or to take another example, it is admissible that the sphere of fire should move toward the center of the earth and that the sphere of the earth should move toward the encompassing heaven. For as they say, according to intellectual admissibility, one place is not more appropriate for one particular body than another place. They also say with regard to all things that are existent and perceptible that supposing anything among them should be bigger than it is or smaller or different from what it is in shape or place – should a human individual, for instance, have the size of a big mountain having many summits overtopping the air, or should there exist an elephant having the size of a flea, or a flea having the size of an elephant – all such differences would be admissible from the point of view of the intellect. The whole world is involved in this method of admissibility as they practice it. For whatever thing of this kind they assume, they are able to say: it is admissible that it should be so, and it is possible that it should be otherwise; and it is not more appropriate that one particular thing should be so than that it should be otherwise. And they say this without paying attention to the correspondence or lack of correspondence of that which exists to their assumptions. For they say of the existent things – provided with | known forms and determinate sizes and necessarily accompanying modes that are unchangeable and immutable – that their being as they are is merely in virtue of the continuance of a habit. In the same way it is the habit of a sultan not to pass through the market places of the city except on horseback, and he has never been seen doing it in a way other than this. However, it is not held impossible by the intellect that he should walk on foot in the city; rather is it undoubtedly possible, and it is admissible that this should occur. They say that the fact that earth moves toward the center and fire upwards or the fact that fire burns and water cools is in a similar way due to the continuance of a habit. It is, in consequence, not impossible from the point of view of the intellect that this habit should undergo a change so that fire should cool and move downwards, while still being fire, and so that similarly water should warm and move

upwards, while still being water. The whole edifice[21] is founded on this assumption. At the same time they are unanimous in holding that the coming-together of two contraries in the same substratum[22] and at the same instant is impossible, cannot be true, and cannot be admitted by the intellect. They further assert that it is impossible and cannot be admitted by the intellect that a substance should exist without there being any accident in it; or, as some of them say, it is also impossible and cannot be admitted by the intellect that an accident should exist without being in a substratum. Similarly they say that it cannot be true that a substance should be transformed into an accident or an accident into a substance or that a body should compenetrate another body; they acknowledge that these are impossibilities from the point of view of the intellect. Now it is a true assertion that none of the things that they consider as impossible can be mentally represented to oneself in any way whatever, whereas the things they call possible can be. Yet the philosophers say that when you call a thing "impossible," it is because it cannot be imagined, and when you call a thing "possible," it is because it can be imagined. Thus what is possible according to you is possible only from the point of view of the imagination and not from that of the intellect. Accordingly in this premise you consider that which is necessary, admissible, or impossible, sometimes | with the imagination and not with the intellect and sometimes with the first suggestions of common opinion—just as Abū Naṣr[23] has noted when speaking of the notion to which the Mutakallimūn apply the term "intellect." Thus it has already been made clear that that which can be imagined is, according to them, something possible, whether something existent corresponds to it or not. On the other hand, everything that cannot be imagined is impossible. Now this premise cannot be true except in virtue of the nine premises previously mentioned. Undoubtedly it was because of it that they had recourse to expounding these nine premises before it. The explanation of this is in accordance with what I shall set forth to you while I reveal to you the secrets of these matters in the form of a dispute taking place between a Mutakallim and a philosopher.

The Mutakallim said to the philosopher: Why is it that we find this body, which is iron, is endowed with extreme hardness and strength, while

21. Literally: matter. 22. Or: in the same place.

23. Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 950) is meant. This philosopher's principal treatises and his influence on Maimonides are referred to in the Translator's Introduction. The passage alluded to in the text occurs in al-Fārābī's *Risāla fi'l-ʿAql* (*Epistle on the Intellect*), ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1938), pp. 11–12.

being black; whereas that other body, which is cream, is endowed with extreme softness and looseness, while being white?

The philosopher replied to him: Every natural body has two species of accidents: those that are attached to it in respect to its matter, such as those making man healthy and ill; and those that are attached to it in respect to its form, such as man's feeling of wonder and his laughing. Now the various kinds of matter found in bodies that are in the stage of ultimate composition differ greatly because of the forms, which particularize these various kinds of matter, so that the substance of iron becomes different from that of cream and so that each of these substances has attached to it the differing accidents that you see. Thus strength subsisting in the one substance and softness subsisting in the other are accidents that follow from the difference of their forms, and blackness and whiteness are accidents that follow from the difference of their ultimate matter.

Thereupon the Mutakallim controverted this entire reply by means of the premises of his doctrine as I shall set forth to you. In effect he said: There does not exist at all, contrary to what you think, any form constituting a substance so that a variety of substances is thereby brought about. | On the contrary, everything that you consider as a form is an accident — as we have made clear from their assertion in the eighth premise. Then he said: There is no difference between the substance of iron and the substance of cream, the whole being composed of atoms similar to one another — as we have made clear from their opinions set forth in the first premise, from which, as we have explained, the second and the third follow necessarily. Similarly the twelfth premise is required for establishing the existence of atoms. Furthermore, it is not true, in the opinion of a Mutakallim, that there are certain accidents that particularize a substance so that because of them it is disposed and prepared to receive other secondary accidents. For in his opinion, one accident cannot serve as a substratum for another — as we have made clear in the ninth premise — and moreover, an accident has no continued existence — as we have made clear in the sixth premise. Then when, according to the Mutakallim, everything he wishes with regard to his premises is established as true, the resultant conclusion is that the substances of the iron and the cream are the same substances,[24] substances similar to one another in every respect. Each of these substances has the same relation with any accident,[25] one particular substance not being more appropriate for one particular accident than another. And just as one atom

24. Literally: one substance. 25. Literally: with every accident.

is not more fitted to move than to be at rest, so one particular atom is not more appropriate for the reception of the accident of life, the accident of the intellect, the accident of sense, than any other atom. The greater or smaller number of the atoms does not in this point constitute a significant addition to the final result, as an accident subsists in every atom — as we have made clear on the basis of their assertion in the fifth premise. Accordingly it follows necessarily from all these premises that man is not more fitted to cognize intellectually than a beetle. And thus the admissibility of which [the Mutakallimūn] speak in the present premise follows necessarily. In fact it was with a view to this premise | that the whole endeavor was made, because this premise is more firm than any other thing for establishing everything that there is a wish to establish, as shall be made clear.

A CALL UPON THE READER'S ATTENTION

Know, thou who studiest this Treatise: if you are of those who know the soul and its powers and have acquired true knowledge of everything as it really is, you already know that imagination exists in most living beings. As for the perfect animal, I mean the one endowed with a heart, the existence of imagination in it is clear. Accordingly, man is not distinguished by having imagination; and the act of imagination is not the act of the intellect but rather its contrary. For the intellect divides the composite things and differentiates their parts and makes abstractions of them, represents them to itself in their true reality and with their causes, and apprehends from one thing very many notions, which differ for the intellect just as two human individuals differ in regard to their existence for the imagination. It is by means of the intellect that the universal is differentiated from the individual, and no demonstration is true except by means of universals. It is also through the intellect that essential predicates are discerned from accidental ones. None of these acts belongs to the imagination. For the imagination apprehends only that which is individual and composite as a whole, as it is apprehended by the senses; or compounds things that in their existence are separate, combining one with another; the whole[26] being a body or a force of the body. Thus someone using his imagination imagines a human individual having a horse's head and wings and so on. This is what is called a thing invented and false, for nothing existent corresponds to it at all. In its apprehension, imagination is in no way able to hold itself aloof from matter, even if it turns a form into the

26. Resulting from this activity.

extreme of abstraction. For this reason there can be no critical examination in the imagination.

Hear what | the mathematical sciences have taught us and how capital are the premises we have obtained from them. Know that there are things that a man, if he considers them with his imagination, is unable to represent to himself in any respect, but finds that it is as impossible to imagine them as it is impossible for two contraries to agree; and that afterwards the existence of the thing that is impossible to imagine is established by demonstration as true, and existence manifests it as real. Thus if you imagine a big sphere of any size you like, even if it be the size of the encompassing heaven; imagine further a diameter passing through the center of the sphere; and thereupon imagine the two human individuals standing upon the two extremities of the diameter so that their feet are put in a straight line with respect to the diameter, so that their feet and the diameter form one and the same straight line — then one of two possibilities must be true: either the diameter is parallel to the horizon or it is not. Now if it is parallel, both individuals should fall. If it is not parallel, one of them — namely the lower one — should fall, while the other is firmly placed. It is in that way that imagination would apprehend the matter. Now it has been demonstrated that the earth is spherical in form and that portions of the inhabited part of it lie at both extremities of its diameter. Thus the head of every individual from among the inhabitants of the two extremities is near heaven while his feet are near the feet of another individual who is opposite him. It is thus impossible in every way that either of them would fall. This cannot even be represented to oneself; for one of them is not placed above and the other below, but each of them is both above and below in relation to the other. Similarly it has been made clear in the second book of the "Conic Sections"[27] that two lines, between which there is a certain distance at the outset, may go forth in such a way that the farther they go, this distance diminishes and they come nearer to one another, but without it ever being possible for them to meet even if they are drawn forth to infinity and even though they come nearer to one another the farther they go. This cannot be | imagined and can in no way enter within the net of the imagination. Of these two lines, one is straight and the other curved, as has been made clear there in the above-mentioned work.

Accordingly it has been demonstrated that something that the imagination cannot imagine or apprehend and that is impossible from its point of

27. Maimonides refers to the *Conic Sections* of the Greek mathematician Apollonius; Book II, theorem xiii.

view, can exist. It has similarly been demonstrated that something the imagination considers as necessary is impossible – namely, that God, may He be exalted, should be a body or a force in a body. For according to the imagination, there are no existents[28] except bodies[28] or things[28] in bodies.[28]

Accordingly it is clear that there is something else by means of which that which is necessary, that which is admissible, and that which is impossible, can be discerned, something that is not the imagination. How excellent is this speculation and how great its utility for him who wishes to awaken from this dormancy, I mean the state of following the imagination! Do not think that the Mutakallimūn are not aware of anything concerning this point. On the contrary, they are aware of it to a certain extent; they know it and call that which may be imagined while being at the same time impossible – as for instance God's being a body – a fantasy and a vain imagining. And often do they clearly state that fantasies are false. For this reason they have recourse to the nine premises we have mentioned, so as to be able to establish with their help the truth of this tenth premise – which asserts the admissibility of those imaginings that they wanted to be declared admissible – in order to maintain the similarity of the atoms to one another and the equality of the accidents with respect to "accidentality," as we have made clear.

Consider, thou who art engaged in speculation, and perceive that a method of profound speculation has arisen. For with regard to particular mental representations, one individual claims that they are intellectual representations, whereas another affirms that they are imaginative representations. We wish consequently to find something that would enable us to distinguish the things cognized intellectually from those imagined. For if the philosopher says, as he does: That which exists[29] is my witness and by means of it we discern the necessary, the possible, and the impossible; the adherent of the Law says to him: The dispute between us is with regard to this point. For we claim[30] that that which exists | was made[31] in virtue of will and was not a necessary consequence. Now if it was made in this fashion, it is admissible that it should be made in a different way, unless intellectual representation decides, as you think it decides, that something different from what exists at present is not admissible. This is the chapter of admissibility. And about that I have something to say, which you will

28. In the singular in the Arabic text. 29. Or: existence.
30. The text suggests that a literal translation may be: we claim, as far as I am concerned.
31. The verb used generally means "done" or "acted."

learn[32] in various passages of this Treatise. It is not something one hastens to reject in its entirety with nonchalance.

THE ELEVENTH PREMISE

This is their saying that the existence of that which is infinite in any mode whatever is impossible. The explanation of this is as follows. The impossibility of the existence of an infinite magnitude has already been demonstrated, or the existence of magnitudes infinite in number – even if each of them is of finite magnitude – provided that those magnitudes infinite in number are supposed to coexist in time. Similarly the existence of an infinite number of causes is impossible – I mean to say that a thing should be the cause of something, that this thing should have a cause[33] in its turn, that that cause should again have a cause, and so forth to infinity, so that an infinite number of numerable[34] things should exist in actu; and it is indifferent whether these be bodies or things separate from matter, provided only that some of them are the causes of others. It is this natural and essential orderly arrangement with regard to which it has been demonstrated that the infinite is impossible in it. But as for what is infinite in potentia or accidentally, the existence of such an infinite has, in some cases, been demonstrated: thus it has been demonstrated that the division of magnitudes to infinity is possible in potentia, and likewise the division of time to infinity. Another case is an object of speculation: namely, the existence of what is infinite by way of succession. This is what is called the infinite by accident. And it consists in a thing coming to exist after the passing-away | of another thing, the latter's coming to exist after the passing-away of a third thing, and so forth to infinity. About this there is an extremely profound speculation. Thus he who claims to have demonstrated the eternity of the world says that time is not finite, and nothing absurd follows necessarily for him therefrom. For as soon as a portion of time is actualized, another portion passes away. Similarly the succession of accidents, which attach themselves to matter, goes on, in his opinion, to infinity, without an absurdity necessarily following for him from this assertion. For the accidents do not all exist simultaneously, but in succession; and the impossibility of this has not been demonstrated. As for the Mutakallimūn, there is no difference, in their opinion, between saying that a certain infinite magnitude exists and saying that bodies and time are liable to be divided to infinity. There likewise is no difference, in their opinion, between asserting the simultaneous existence of things infinite in number, arranged,

32. Literally: hear. 33. Literally: another cause. 34. Or: numbered.

[at the same time] in orderly fashion—your saying this, for instance, as it were, about the human individuals existing at present—or your asserting that things infinite in number came into existence, but passed away one after the other. It is as if you said: Zayd is the son of Umar, Umar is the son of Khālid, Khālid is the son of Bakr, and so forth to infinity. This position is likewise absurd according to them, just as the first was. Thus these four divisions of the infinite are equivalent according to them. Some of them wish, in a way that I shall explain to you in the present Treatise, to establish the correctness of the last of these divisions—I mean to say, they wish to make clear its impossibility. Others say that this impossibility is self-evident for the intellect through the spontaneous perception of the mind and that it does not require demonstration. Now if it is a clear absurdity that things infinite in number should exist successively, even though those of them that exist at present are finite in number, the eternity of the world can be considered | through the spontaneous perception of the mind as absurd. And there is no need in any respect for any other premise. However, this is not the place for the investigation of this subject.

THE TWELFTH PREMISE

This is their saying that the senses do not always procure certain knowledge. For the Mutakallimūn have been suspicious with regard to the apprehension of the senses on two counts. One of them arises from the fact that, as they say, the senses miss many of the objects of their sensations either because of the subtlety of the body of the object of apprehension—as they mention with regard to the atoms and what pertains to them, as we have made clear—or because of the distance of the objects of apprehension from the apprehending subject. Thus a man does not see, hear, and smell at a distance extending to several parasangs, and it is impossible to apprehend the motion of the heaven. The second count arises from their saying that the senses can be mistaken with regard to the object of their apprehension. Thus a man, when he is far off, sees a big thing as small; a small thing as big, if it is in water; and a crooked thing as straight, if part of it is in water and part of it outside. Similarly someone suffering from jaundice sees things as yellow, and one whose tongue is steeped with yellow bile tastes sweet things as bitter. They enumerate many things of that kind. They say: for this reason the senses should not be trusted to the extent of adopting them as the principles of demonstration. Do not think that agreement of the Mutakallimūn in affirming this premise is gratuitous. That

would be similar to the belief[35] of the majority of the later Mutakallimūn that the wish of their predecessors to establish the existence of the indivisible particle did not correspond to a need. In fact, all their assertions that we have set forth in the foregoing passages are necessary; and if one premise were to be destroyed, the whole purpose would be destroyed. Indeed this | last of the premises is most necessary. For whenever we apprehend with our senses things controverting their assumptions, they are able to say: no attention should be paid to the senses as the matter – which, as they think, has been proven by the testimony of the intellect – is demonstrated. This is the case with regard to their claim that continuous motion is interrupted by units of rest, with regard to their other claim that the millstone undergoes a division when revolving, and with regard to still another claim of theirs that the whiteness of this garment has become nonexistent at this instant and that this whiteness is another whiteness. These are assertions that run counter to what can be seen. There are furthermore many things necessarily following from the existence of vacuum, all of which are contradicted by the senses. Consequently the answer to all this is, when this answer is possible, that the particular thing one is concerned with has been missed by the senses. In other cases, the answer is given that it is one of the errors of the senses. You already know that all these are ancient opinions, which had been held by the Sophists. About the latter, Galen, in his book "On the Natural Faculties,"[36] states that they taxed the senses with lying and relates everything that you already know.[37]

After having prefaced these premises, I shall begin to make clear their methods with regard to the four above-mentioned problems.

35. Literally: thinking.
36. The passage referred to occurs in Book I, chap. ii. It reads (in A. J. Brock's translation): "The Sophists, however, while allowing that bread in turning into blood becomes changed as regards sight, taste, and touch, will not agree that this change occurs in reality. Thus some of them hold that all such phenomena are tricks and illusions of our senses; the senses, they say, are affected now in one way, now in another, whereas the underlying substance does not admit of any of these changes to which the names are given."
37. Literally: as Galen states in his book "On the Natural Faculties" about them who taxed the senses with lying and relates everything that you already know.

CHAPTER 74

In this chapter I shall include for your benefit a narration of the proofs of the Mutakallimūn showing that the world is created in time. Do not demand of me that I set them forth in their terminology and at such length as they do. However I shall inform you of what every one of them intends and of the method he uses in order to adduce proof establishing the creation of the world in time | or refuting its eternity. I shall draw your attention with brevity to the premises used by the author of each method. When you shall read their lengthy books and famous works, you shall not find in them in any respect, in the proofs they adduce with regard to the subject in question, a single notion in addition to what you will understand from my exposition here. However, you shall find a lengthier exposition and resplendent and fine diction. Sometimes they use rhymed prose and symmetrical words and choose eloquent language. Sometimes also, they make their diction obscure intending to astonish the listener and to strike terror into the student. In their works you shall likewise very often find reiteration of notions, formulations of doubts and—as they think—their solution, and polemics against those who disagree with them.

THE FIRST METHOD

Some[1] of them think that any single happening occurring in time may be adduced as proof that the world has been created in time. You say, as it were: the individual Zayd has been a drop of sperm and has thereupon passed from one state to another until he has reached his perfection. It is impossible that it was he who changed himself and made himself pass from one state to another. There accordingly must be in his case someone outside him who changes him. Thus it has been made clear that he requires an artificer who has constructed his frame and has made him pass from one state to another. The same inference applies to a palm tree and other things. The same inference, he says, applies to the world as a whole. Thus you see that he believes that whatever rule may be found with regard to one particular body must necessarily be applied to every body.

THE SECOND METHOD

They say likewise that the fact that a procreative individual is created in time | demonstrates that the whole world has been created in time. The

1. Or: one.

explanation of this is as follows. Once upon a time this Zayd was not here; then he is. Accordingly if he is, it is impossible in every respect that he should not derive from his father Umar. Now his father Umar is likewise produced in time. Accordingly if his father is, it is impossible that he, Umar, should not be generated from Zayd's grandfather Khālid. But Zayd's grandfather Khālid is also produced in time. Thus this goes on to infinity. However, they have assumed, as we have made clear in the eleventh of their premises, that the existence of an infinity of this kind is impossible. Similarly if I should ultimately come to a first individual having no father —that is, *Adam*—there would necessarily arise the question: from what was this *Adam* generated? Accordingly you would say, to take an example: from dust. Thereupon it would necessarily be asked: from what was that dust generated? To take an example, the answer would be given: from water. Thereupon it would be asked: from what was this water generated? They say that this series of questions and answers might undoubtedly either go on to infinity, which is absurd, or would ultimately stop at the existence of one thing—an existence that would come to pass after pure nothingness—and that this latter solution is the true one and that questioning ceases when it has arrived at this ultimate term. Accordingly this constitutes, as they say, a demonstration of the world's having come into existence after pure and absolute nothingness.

THE THIRD METHOD

They say that the substances[2] of the world cannot in any respect be anything but aggregated or separated. And sometimes certain substances are aggregated, whereas others are separated. It is accordingly clear and manifest that in respect of the essence of the atoms, neither aggregation nor separation was necessarily in them to the exclusion of the other possibility. For if their essence and nature would only require their being separated, they would never aggregate. Similarly if their essence and true reality would | only require their being aggregated, they would never be separated. And therefore separation is not more fit for them than aggregation, nor is aggregation more appropriate to them than separation. Thus the fact that some of them are aggregated, while others are separated, and still others undergo modifications of their state, being sometimes aggregated and sometimes separated, is a proof that they, I mean the substances, require someone who aggregates those that are aggregated and separates those that are separated. Thus this is, as they say, as proof of the world's being created

2. Cf. n. 11 of the preceding chapter.

in time. It is already clear to you that the author of this method has used the first of their premises and all that necessarily follows from it.

THE FOURTH METHOD

They say: the world in its entirety is composed of substances and accidents. Now no substance can be exempt from one or several accidents. And all accidents are produced in time. Accordingly it follows necessarily that the substance that serves as a substratum for them is also produced in time. For everything that is conjoined with accidents and cannot be exempt from them is produced in time. Accordingly the world in its entirety is produced in time. If, however, someone says: perhaps substance is not produced in time, whereas accidents are conjoined successively – one following the other to infinity – with the atoms; they say: it would necessarily follow that there is an infinite number of things produced in time. Now this they have assumed to be absurd. This is, according to them, the most intelligent and the best of the methods in question, so that many think it is a demonstration. Now in this method three premises are assumed, which are required for an object that cannot be hidden from those engaged in speculation. One of these premises is that anything that is infinite through succession is impossible. The second | is that all accidents come into being in time. Now our adversary who maintains the eternity of the world contradicts us with regard to one accident – namely, circular movement. For Aristotle considers that circular movement is not subject to generation and corruption. Because of this, the thing that is endowed with this motion is, in his opinion, not subject to generation and corruption. It is accordingly useless for us to establish the coming-into-being in time of the other accidents with regard to whose coming-into-being in time our adversary does not contradict us, maintaining that they succeed one another in rotation supervening on something that is not produced in time. Similarly he maintains with respect to the above-mentioned accident alone, that is, the circular movement – I mean the movement of the heavenly sphere – that it is not produced in time and that it does not belong to any of the species of the accidents produced in time. Accordingly this accident is the only one that has to be investigated and the production of which in time has to be made clear. The third of the premises assumed by the author of this method is that there is no sensible being except substances and accidents, I mean to say the atoms and such of their accidents as he believes in. But if the body is composed of matter and form, as our adversary has demonstrated, it ought to be demonstrated that the first matter and the first form are subject to generation

and corruption. If this is done, the demonstration of the coming-into-being of the world in time will be true.

THE FIFTH METHOD

This is the method of particularization. And it is a method to which they accord very great preference. Its principle refers back to what I have made clear to you in regard to the tenth of their premises. For [the Mutakallim] directs his thought to the world as a whole or to any part of it he likes and says: it is admissible that this should be endowed with | the shape, size, and accidents it has and that it should be in the time and place in which it exists; and it is also admissible that it should be bigger or smaller, endowed with another shape or with those other accidents, or that it should exist prior to or after the time in which it exists or in another place than that in which it is found. Accordingly its particularization in respect of a certain shape or a certain size or place or accident and a particular time and therewithal the admissibility of all this being different, is a proof of the existence of someone who particularizes, who has freedom of choice, and who has willed one of two admissible possibilities. Now the fact that the world as a whole or any part of it requires someone who particularizes is a proof of its being created in time. For there is no difference between your saying someone who particularizes or who makes or who creates or who brings into existence or who creates in time or who purposes the universe—all these terms being intended to signify one single notion. They ramify this method into very many subdivisions of a general or a particular nature. Thus they say: the earth's being under the water is not more appropriate than its being above the water. Who therefore has particularized that place for it? And the sun's being circular is not more appropriate than its being square or triangular, as all shapes bear the same relation to the bodies endowed with shapes. Who therefore has particularized the sun in respect of the shape it has? They consider in a similar way all the particulars[3] of the world as a whole, so that when they see flowers of different colors they marvel, and this proof becomes even firmer for them. They say: this is the same earth and the same water; wherefore is this flower yellow and that one red? Can this be except through the agency of someone who particularizes? And this someone who particularizes is the deity. Thus the world as a whole requires someone to particularize it as a whole and each of its parts by means

3. The Arabic word *juz'iyyāt* used here derives from another root than the word translated as "particularization."

of one of the various admissible possibilities.[4] All this follows necessarily if the tenth premise is assumed as true. | Moreover some who believe in the eternity of the world do not contradict us with regard to particularization, as we shall make clear. To sum up: this is to my mind a most excellent method. I have, with regard to it, an opinion which you shall hear.

THE SIXTH METHOD

One of the later ones thought that he had come upon a most excellent method superior to all the methods known before. This method is concerned with the preponderance given to existence over nonexistence. He said: according to everyone, the world is possible in respect of existence; for if its existence were necessary, it would be the deity. Now we only engage in discussion with those who, on the one hand, affirm the existence of the deity and, on the other, maintain the eternity of the world. Now that which is possible is that of which it is possible that it should exist and it is equally possible that it should not exist, existence not being more appropriate to it than nonexistence. Now the fact that this thing, which is possible in respect of existence, exists in spite of the equal validity of its status as an existent[5] and of its status as a nonexistent[6] proves that there is someone who gives preponderence to its existence over its nonexistence. This is a very persuasive method and is a ramification of the method of particularization of which we have just now spoken. The author of this method has merely replaced the expression "someone who particularizes" by the expression "someone who gives preponderance," and replaced the states of an existent by the very existence of an existent.[7] He has led us into error or made an error himself with regard to the meaning of the statement: the world is possible in respect of its existence. For our adversary who believes in the eternity of the world, when he says that the world is possible in respect of existence, uses the term "possible," as we shall make clear, in another sense than that in which it is used by the Mutakallim. Furthermore, the assertion of the author of this method that the world requires someone who should give preponderance to its existence over its nonexistence is a subject of very pronounced vain fantasy. For there can be giving of preponderance and

4. In accord with some MSS, I read *jā'izāt* and not *juz'iyyāt*, the latter being the reading adopted by Munk, who follows certain other MSS. This second reading agrees with the Hebrew translations of Ibn Tibbon and Alḥarizi. *juz'iyyāt* means "particulars."
5. Literally: of existence. 6. Literally: of nonexistence.
7. Whereas according to the Fifth Method, someone who particularizes determines the states of the existents, the Sixth Method maintains that their existence or nonexistence requires someone who gives preponderance.

particularization only with respect to a particular existent that is equally receptive of two contraries or of two different things. Accordingly it can be said of it that inasmuch as | we have found it in a certain state and not in another, there is proof of the existence of an artificer possessing purpose. It is as if you said that this copper is not more suitable for the reception of the form of a pitcher than of the form of a lamp. In consequence, when we find it as a lamp or a pitcher, we know with necessity that someone who particularizes and who has a purpose purposed one of those two admissible things. Consequently it is clear that the copper exists and that two admissible things brought in relation with it are nonexistent in it before he who gives preponderance has given it. On the other hand, this notion cannot be represented in any respect of an existent thing as to which there is disagreement whether its existence, as it is, has had no limit in the past and will have no limit in the future or whether it has come to existence after nonexistence. The question – who has given the preponderance to its existence over its nonexistence? – can be asked only after it has been recognized that this existent has come to existence after nonexistence. For this is the subject concerning which there is disagreement. Now if we consider its existence and nonexistence only from the mental point of view, we come back to the identical tenth premise. For it is concerned with the consideration of imaginations and vain fantasies, not with that of existents and intellectually cognized things. For the adversary who believes in the eternity of the world is of the opinion that our imagining its nonexistence is similar to our imagining any impossible thing whatever that occurs to the imagination. The purpose is not to demolish their assertions. I have merely made it clear to you that this method – which was thought to be different from the preceding one – is not correct, for its status is identical with that of what preceded as far as the assumption of the well-known admissibility is concerned.

THE SEVENTH METHOD

One[8] of the creationists maintains that the creation of the world in time is established by what the philosophers say regarding the permanent existence of the souls. He says: if | the world is eternal, the number of the men who died in the limitless past is infinite. There would therefore be an infinite number of souls existing simultaneously. Now this is a thing of which it has been indubitably demonstrated that it is false – I mean the simultaneous existence of an infinite number of numerable things. Now

8. Or: some.

this is a wondrous method, for it makes clear a hidden matter by something even more hidden. To this, the proverb well known among the Syrians may truthfully be applied: *Your guarantee needs another guarantee.* It is as if he already possessed a demonstration of the permanence of the souls and as if he knew in what form they last and what thing it is that lasts, so that he could make use thereof for drawing inferences. Now if his intention was to force doubt upon the adversary who believes in the eternity of the world and at the same time in the permanence of the souls, this consequence would follow necessarily if the adversary would concede to him who tried to arouse the doubt that the imaginings that that individual entertains about his[9] [to wit, the adversary's] speech concerning the continued existence of the souls were well-founded. Now some of the later philosophers have resolved this doubt by saying that the souls endowed with continued existence were not bodies so that they would have place and position; and that in regard to their existence, infinity in number would be impossible for them. Now you know that regarding the things separate from matter – I mean those that are neither bodies nor forces in bodies, but intellects – there can be no thought of multiplicity of any mode whatever, except that some of them are the causes of the existence of others and that thus there is a difference among them since one is the cause and the other the effect. However, what remains of Zayd is neither the cause nor the effect of what remains of Umar. Consequently all are one in number, as Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣā'igh[10] and others who were drawn into speaking of these obscure matters have made clear.[11] To sum up: | premises by which other points are to be explained should not be taken over from such hidden matters, which the mind is incapable of representing to itself.

Know that whoever wishes to establish as true the coming-into-being of the world in time or to prove false its eternity by means of these methods of the kalām must necessarily use one of these two premises or both of them: these premises being the tenth, whereby I mean the doctrine of mental admissibility with a view to establishing someone who particularizes; or the eleventh premise, according to which the infinite by succession is impossible. They establish the correctness of this latter premise in various ways. One

9. Or: in his.
10. Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣā'igh Ibn Bājja (the Avempace of the Latins; d. 1138), was the founder of the Peripatetic philosophic school of Moslem Spain. His works, one of which is entitled the *Regimen of the Solitary* (*Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid*), seem to have been well known to Maimonides.
11. Ibn Bājja's doctrine of the Unity of the Intellect accordingly seems to be accepted by Maimonides. Cf. Translator's Introduction.

of them consists in that he who adduces the proof directs his attention to one of the species whose individuals are subject to generation and corruption. Furthermore, he directs his attention in his mind to a time in the past. Now from the belief that the world is eternal, it follows necessarily that all the individuals of that particular species going back from a given time in the past to the preceding time are infinite in number. And similarly, all the individuals of that same species from a date posterior by one thousand years, for example, to the preceding time are likewise infinite in number. Now the latter group of individuals is greater than the former by the number of those who were born during the thousand years. Accordingly they conclude from this consideration – necessarily, as they believe – that an infinite may be greater in number than another infinite. They do the same thing also with regard to the revolutions of the heavenly sphere, from which they conclude – necessarily, as they believe – that an infinite number of revolutions may be greater than another infinite number of revolutions. They also compare the number of revolutions of one heavenly sphere with that of another and slower one, both of which numbers are infinite. They do the same also with regard to all accidents produced in time. For they count their nonexistent individuals[12] and act in imagination as if they were existent and as if they had some beginning, and thereupon they add to | the objects of fantasy or subtract from them. All these are matters of fantasy, not of existence. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī has demolished[13] the premise in question and has laid bare what belongs to fantasy in all its various details. You will find a clear limpid exposition of his argument if you study without partisanship in his well-known book, "The Changing Beings."[14]

The foregoing are the principal methods of the Mutakallimūn in establishing the coming-into-being of the world in time. Now when, by means of these proofs, it was established to their mind that the world was produced in time, it followed of necessity that it has an artificer who has produced it in time with a purpose and by the use of will and freedom of choice. Thereupon they made clear that He is one by means of methods that we shall explain to you in the next chapter.

12. Apparently the individuals of the accidents. 13. Literally: has brained the premise.
14. This treatise has not been found. On al-Fārābī, cf. Translator's Introduction.

CHAPTER 75

I shall explain to you likewise in this chapter the proofs of the belief in unity according to the opinion of the Mutakallimūn. They say that that which is indicated by what exists as being its maker and its bringer into existence is one. Their principal methods in establishing oneness are two: the method referring to reciprocal hindering, and the method of differing from one another.

THE FIRST METHOD

Namely, the method referring to reciprocal hindering is the one preferred by the multitude [of Mutakallimūn]. Its meaning is this: he says that if the world had two gods, it would necessarily follow that a substance, which cannot be exempt from one of two contraries, could either be deprived of both contraries — which is impossible — or that two contraries could be conjoined in it at | the same time and in the same substratum — which is likewise impossible. For instance, one god wishes at present to warm one or more substances, whereas the other wishes to cool them. This would have one of two consequences: [1] They would be neither warm nor cold because the two actions hinder each other; and that is impossible, for every body must receive one of these two contraries. Or [2] the body in question would be at the same time both warm and cold. Similarly if one of the two gods would wish to move a particular body, it would be admissible that the other would wish to set it at rest. Accordingly it would necessarily follow that it would be neither in motion nor at rest, or that it would be at the same time both in motion and at rest. This kind of argumentation meant to lead to a proof is founded on the doctrine of the atoms, which is the first of their premises, and on the premise concerning the creation of accidents and on the premise according to which the privations of habitus are existent things requiring an agent to bring them into existence. For if someone should maintain that the lower matter, in which there is — according to the opinion of the philosophers — a succession of generation and corruption, is not the higher matter (I mean the substrata of the heavenly spheres), which assumption has been demonstrated; and if, furthermore, someone should affirm — according to the belief of the dualists — that there exist two gods, one of whom governs the lower matter, there being no connection between his activity and the heavenly spheres, while the other governs the spheres,

there being no connection between his activity and hyle: this opinion would in no way necessitate reciprocal hindering. If, however, someone would maintain that this view implies a deficiency in each of the two gods, as either of them would not be able to act freely upon the things upon which the other acts freely, he could be given the answer: this is not a deficiency in either of them if it is impossible for him to exert an action upon the thing with which his activity has no connection. Nor is it a deficiency for an artificer to have no power over what is impossible for him, just as in our opinion—that of the community of believers in unity—it is no deficiency | in the One that He does not conjoin contraries in one substratum, and His power is not affected by this and by other similar impossibilities. As [the Mutakallimūn] became aware of the weakness of this method, in spite of their having some incentive to choose it, they adopted another method.

THE SECOND METHOD

They say: if there were two gods it would be necessary that one notion apply to both, while another notion would apply only to one and not to the other; this second notion would account for the difference between the two gods. Now this is a philosophic and demonstrative method, if it is followed step by step and if its premises are made clear. I shall make them clear when speaking of the opinions of the philosophers regarding this subject. However, this method too may not be applied in the doctrines of any of those who believe in the divine attributes. For according to him, the Eternal, may He be exalted, has several different notions subsisting in Him. The notion of knowledge is, in his opinion, different from that of power, and that of power is, in his opinion, different from that of will. And withal it would not be impossible[1] that either of the two gods should possess several notions, some of which he would have in common with the other god, while differing from the latter through possession of others.

THE THIRD METHOD

There is a further method that is in need of one of the premises of the partisans of this method. For some of them, namely, the ancients among them, believe that God wills by a will that is not something superadded to the essence of the creator, but is a will that does not subsist in a substratum. And in accordance with | this premise, which we have made clear, or rather in accordance with the conception of it, which you shall see, they maintained that there is one will that does not subsist in a substratum and cannot

1. Ibn Tibbon adds: according to that opinion.

belong to two beings. For as they say, there cannot be a single cause that necessarily effects two statuses for two different essences. As I have let you know, this amounts to the explanation of something hidden by something even more hidden. For the will they refer to cannot be represented to oneself. According to some of them it is an impossibility. As for the others who hold to this opinion, doubts in unlimited numbers arise regarding it. And yet they have recourse to it as being a proof of unity.

THE FOURTH METHOD

They say: the existence of an act necessarily indicates an agent and does not indicate to us a number of agents. Again there is no difference between the affirmations that the deity is two or three or twenty or any other number that might occur. This is clear and manifest. If, however, you say that this proof does not prove the impossibility of multiplicity in the deity, but merely proves an ignorance of the number of the deities – it being possible that there is only one and it being possible that there are many – he would complete his demonstration by saying: there is no possibility in respect of the being of God, for it is necessary. Accordingly, the possibility of a multiplicity of gods is shown to be false. This is the way in which this prover fashioned his proof. The error in this is most clear. For in the being of Him, may He be exalted, there resides no possibility, whereas possibility resides in our knowledge of it. For what is possible in respect of knowledge is not yet possible in respect of being. Perhaps just as the Christians think that He is three, and it is not so, we think that He is one, and the matter is not so. This is clear to whoever has trained himself in the knowledge of the necessary proceeding of conclusions from their premises. |

THE FIFTH METHOD

One of the later ones thought that he had found a demonstrative method for the belief in unity, namely, the method starting from need. The explanation of it is as follows. He says: if one is sufficient for making the beings, a second one is superfluous and not required. If, however, being cannot be perfected and brought into orderly arrangement except by the two of them in conjunction, then incapacity is attached to each of them, as each of them needs the other and is in consequence not self-sufficient. Now this is merely a ramification of the method concerning reciprocal hindering. This way of arguing with a view to a proof may be criticized by means of the statement that not everyone who does not do that which it is not

within his substance to do is called incapable. For we do not call a human individual weak because he cannot move one thousand hundred-weights, and we do not attribute to God, may He be exalted, incapacity because He is unable to corporify His essence or to create someone like Him or to create a square whose diagonal is equal to its side. And similarly we should not say that he is incapable because he does not create alone, for it is a necessity of their being that they should be two. This is not need but a necessity, anything different from which is an impossibility. For just as we do not say that God, may He be cherished and magnified, is incapable because He is not able – according to their opinion – to bring a body into existence otherwise than through creating atoms and aggregating them by means of accidents that He creates in them; and just as we do not call this need and incapacity because anything different from it is impossible: so the associationist, for his part, maintains that it is impossible the one should act alone; this is not an incapacity in either of the two, for it belongs to their necessary being that they should be two.

One of [the Mutakallimūn] was so wearied by those tricks that he affirmed that the belief in unity was accepted in virtue of the Law. The Mutakallimūn considered this statement as very disgraceful | and despised him who made it. As for me, I am of the opinion that he among them who had made this statement was a man of a most rightly directed mind, averse to the acceptance of sophistries. Accordingly, as he did not hear in their speeches anything that was in truth a demonstration and found that his soul was not at peace with what they considered a demonstration, he said that the belief in unity was a thing accepted from the Law. For these groups of people did not leave being with any permanent nature so that arguments could be adduced from it with a view to correct proof, nor did they leave the intellect with a sound, inborn disposition by means of which correct conclusions could be drawn. All this was done on purpose so that we could assume that there is an existent of such a kind that by means of it we could demonstrate what cannot be demonstrated. Accordingly the necessary consequence was that we failed to demonstrate what can be demonstrated. No complaint can be made except to God and to the equitable among the men of intellect.

CHAPTER 76

Concerning the refutation of the doctrine of corporeality according to the doctrine of the Mutakallimūn. The methods and the argumentations of the Mutakallimūn purporting to refute the doctrine of corporeality are very feeble, even feebler than their proofs in favor of the belief in unity. For the refutation of the corporeality [of God] is, in their opinion, as it were a ramification necessarily deriving from the root of the belief in unity. They say: the body is not one. Now whoever refutes the doctrine of corporeality because a body is necessarily composed of matter and form and thus is compound—while, on the other hand, it is clear that there can be no composition in the essence of the deity—is, in my opinion, no Mutakallim. | For this proof is not founded on the roots of the Mutakallimūn, but is a correct demonstration founded on the belief in matter and form and on the representation of their notion. And this is a philosophic doctrine, which I shall mention and make clear when speaking of the demonstrations of the philosophers regarding this. In this chapter our purpose is only to mention the proofs, according to their premises and argumentations, of the Mutakallimūn concerning the refutation of corporeality.

THE FIRST METHOD

They say: if the deity is a body, there are only two possibilities with regard to the notion and true reality of divinity. Either it is constituted by all the substances[1] of that body, I mean to say every atom of them, or else it is constituted by only one substance from among the substances of that body. Now if it were constituted by one atom, what would be the utility of the rest of these particles? The existence of that body would have no meaning. If, however, every single particle[2] of that body were required for its constitution, there would be many deities and not one deity. But they have already made clear that he is one. If you consider this proof, you will find that it is built on the first and fifth of their premises.—[But what] if they were told that the body of the deity is not composed of indivisible particles? I mean to say that it is not composed of substances resembling those that, as all of you say, He creates, but is one continuous body not admitting division except in fantasy; and fantasies should not be considered. For you imagine in a similar way that the body of heaven admits of being divided

1. Cf. n. 11, chap. 73 above. 2. I.e., atom.

and split up, whereas the philosopher | maintains that this possibility of division is only due to the action of imagination and of an inference from what is manifest—that is, the bodies existing in our world—to what is hidden.

THE SECOND METHOD

Which is grand in their opinion, refers to the impossibility of resemblance. For He does not resemble any of His creatures. Now if He were a body, He would resemble bodies. They expatiate at great length on this theme and say: if we were to say that He is a body that is not like bodies, you would thereby contradict yourself. For every body is like every other body in respect of corporeality. For bodies only differ from one another in other respects; they mean by the accidents. According to them, it would moreover follow [from the corporeality of God] that He has created something like Him. This proof may be invalidated in two ways. One of them consists in someone's saying: I do not concede the denial of resemblance. What demonstration have you that it is not admissible that God should in any way resemble a thing He has created—by God!—unless you rely in this point, I mean in the denial of God's in any way resembling a created thing, upon the text of a prophetic book? In that case the denial of corporeality would be a doctrine accepted on the authority of a tradition, and not an intellectually cognized doctrine. If you say that if He resembles a thing created by Him, He has created a thing like Him, the disputant says: that thing would not be like Him in all aspects. I do not deny that there are in the deity a multiplicity of notions, so that He offers several aspects. For a believer in corporeality does not shrink from this conclusion. Another way of objecting, which is more arduous, is as follows. It is established and considered correct, among those who have philosophized and have plunged into the doctrines of philosophers, that it is | in a purely equivocal sense that the term "body" is applied both to the heavenly spheres and to the hylic bodies here.[3] For matter here[4] is not identical with matter there,[5] and the forms here[6] are not identical with the form there;[7] but the terms "matter" and "form" are likewise applied equivocally to what is here as well as to the heavenly spheres. And although the heavenly sphere undoubtedly possesses dimensions, the dimensions in themselves are not a body; but a body is a thing composed of matter and form. Now if this is said with regard to the heavenly spheres, the partisan of the doctrine of

3. Literally: these material bodies. 4. Literally: this matter.
5. Literally: that matter. 6. Literally: these forms. 7. Literally: those forms.

corporeality can all the more say it of the deity. Accordingly he would say: the deity is a body possessing dimensions; but His essence, true reality, and substance do not resemble anything that is in the bodies of the created things; and the term "body" is applied to Him and to these bodies in an equivocal sense, just as in the opinion of those who have reached true knowledge of reality, the term "being" is applied to Him and to them in an equivocal sense. The proclaimer of the doctrine of corporeality does not concede that all bodies are composed of particles[8] resembling each other. On the contrary, he says that God is the creator of all these bodies and that they differ in respect of their substance and true reality. And just as he holds that the body of dung is not identical with the body of the sphere of the sun, so he says that the body of created light—I mean the *Indwelling*—is not identical with the body of the heavenly spheres and of the stars; and that the body of the *Indwelling* or the created *Pillar of Cloud* is not identical with the body of the deity, may it be exalted, in his opinion. On the contrary, he says that this body is the perfect and noble essence, which was never composed or changed and which cannot possibly be changed. In this way the being of this body becomes permanently necessary. And by its act[9] it makes everything that is other than itself in accordance with its will and volition. Would that I knew how this feeble opinion can be controverted by means of these wondrous methods of theirs, which I have already let you know. |

THE THIRD METHOD

is this. They say: if the deity were a body, it would be finite, which is correct. If, however, it were finite, it would have a certain magnitude and a certain permanent shape, which is likewise a correct necessary consequence. Then they say: it is admissible that the deity qua body could have been of a bigger or a smaller size or of a different shape than any life or shape whatever. Accordingly its being particularized to a certain size and shape requires something that particularized it. I have heard them greatly praise this proof. It is, however, feebler than all the foregoing proofs, for it is built upon the tenth premise, with regard to which we have already made clear to what extent it is subject to doubts when applied as to the other beings, if it is assumed that they might exist in a way different from their nature. All the more do these doubts arise with regard to the deity. There is no difference between this proof and their assertion concerning the preponderance given to the existence of the world over its nonexistence;

8. I.e., atoms. 9. Literally: acts.

according to that assertion, the existence of the world proves the existence of an agent who has given preponderance to its existence over its nonexistence since it is equally possible that the world should, and that it should not, exist. If now the question should be posed to them why this does not apply to the deity, may it be exalted – and it should be said that inasmuch as it is an existent it follows necessarily that it must have a factor giving preponderance to its existence over its nonexistence – then he undoubtedly would answer by saying that this would lead to an infinite series and hence that the series must doubtlessly end with the necessarily existent in which there is no possibility[10] and who therefore does not require something that would bring him into existence. Now the selfsame answer would necessarily follow in respect of shape and size. For it may be said of all the shapes and sizes whose existence is possible[11] – in the sense that a particular shape or size has not existed and has then come into existence – | that any particular size could have been bigger or smaller than it is in fact, and a shape could have been different; hence there is necessarily a need for something that particularizes. However, the shape and size of the deity, may it be exalted above all deficiency and likening, have not been – so the partisan of the doctrine of corporeality says – nonexistent, and thereafter at a certain time have come into existence so that they would need a factor that particularizes. On the contrary, its essence with its size and shape is necessarily existent. Thus it does not need a factor that particularizes, [nor one that gives preponderance][12] to existence over nonexistence, as there is no possibility of nonexistence in it. Similarly it will not need a factor that particularizes its shape and size since their existence as they are is necessary.

Consider, therefore, you who are engaged in speculation, if you give the preference to the quest for the truth and cast aside passion, blind following of authority, and obeisance to what you are accustomed to hold great. Your soul should not be led into error by the circumstances of these men engaged in speculation, neither by what has happened to them nor by what has come from them. For they are like one who flees from torrid heat into fire. For they have abolished the nature of being and have altered the original disposition of the heavens and the earth by thinking that by means of those premises, it would be demonstrated that the world was created in time. In consequence whereof, they have not demonstrated the creation of the world in time and have destroyed for us the demonstrations of the

10. Or: contingency. 11. Or: contingent.
12. The words in brackets are missing in all but one of the MSS collated in Joel's edition of the Arabic text.

existence and oneness of the deity and of the negation of His corporeality. For the demonstrations, by means of which all this can be made clear, can only be taken from the permanent nature of what exists, a nature that can be seen and apprehended by the senses and the intellect.

Now as we have finished setting forth the end at which their discourse arrives, we shall start upon a presentation of the philosophic premises and of their demonstrations proving the existence and the oneness of the deity and the impossibility of its being a body; whereby we shall grant them for their benefit that the world is eternal, though we do not believe in it. After that I shall show you our own method, that to which correct speculation has conducted us in respect of the perfecting of the demonstration | regarding the three problems in question. After that I shall return and plunge together with the philosophers into the consideration of their assertion concerning the eternity of the world

with the help of the Almighty [Shaddai].

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